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COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE



RAYMAN 2

A MAGICAL NEW ADVENTURE FOR
THE PC AND NINTENDO 64!

• SONIC ADVENTURE!

A VIVID EXPOSE ON SONIC'S WONDERFUL NEW
DREAMCAST ADVENTURE!

• SHENMUE

YU SUZUKI'S AMBITIOUS NEW DREAMCAST
RPG UNVEILED!

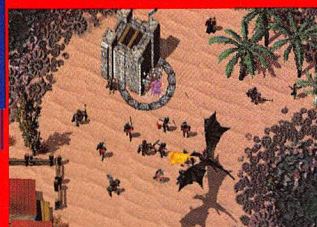
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1 GR MANIFESTO

We've got a great issue for you this month. Besides our exclusive first look at *Rayman 2*, sure to be one of the year's most sought-after 2nd-quarter releases (and an all-around incredible game), we've also blown the roof off of three huge Dreamcast titles destined for U.S. release this fall/winter, beginning with Yu Suzuki's *Shenmue* – the next evolution in role playing games to be sure. Over 40 million dollars in the making, this is one game that will likely exceed expectations. In part one of a two-part series from our man in Japan, you'll find an exhaustive account of the game and events surrounding it. We've also got a vivid exposé of the next evolution of *Sonic*! The first true next-generation *Sonic* by original creator, Yuji Naka, *Sonic Adventure* flexes its little blue muscles on page 42. And, finally, in this month's World Republic, we take a closer look at *Evolution*, Sting's amazing new RPG that could set a new benchmark for the category. As always, we hope you like reading GR as much as we like making it, and thank you for picking us up. Enjoy!

DAVE HALVERSON

GR

March 1999

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GR ISSUE NO.*10 GAMERS' REPUBLIC

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COVERSTORY: RAYMAN 2 .22

AFTER A FOUR-YEAR HIATUS (HE TOOK TWO OFF, AND THEN TWO MORE GETTING READY FOR HIS 3D DEBUT), RAYMAN IS BACK! AND WE'VE GOT HIM IN THIS EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK AT WHAT IS SURE TO BE ONE OF THE YEAR'S FINEST PLATFORMERS FOR PC AND THE NEWLY RAM PAK'D NINTENDO 64.

SONIC ADVENTURE .42

WHEN YOU THINK SEGA, YOU THINK SONIC. SOME SAY HIS EXTENDED FURLOUGH WAS A BIG REASON SEGA LOST ITS FOOTING IN THE 32-BIT RACE. NOW THE INDOMITABLE HEDGEHOG HAS RETURNED, BRINGING WITH HIM THE NEW, ILLUMINATING FACE OF 3D GAMING - AND SEGA. WELCOME BACK, SONIC. AND WELCOME BACK, SEGA. YOU'VE BOTH BEEN MISSED.

MANIFESTO .02	REVIEWS .57	ANIME REPUBLIC .88
FRONTLINES .08	ARCADE CORNER .76	CODEX REPUBLICA .98
DATABASE .18	GR SPORTS .72	CINEMATRIX .102
TECHFRONT .20	WORLD REPUBLIC .80	MUSIC .100
PREVIEWS .32	GR SYNTHETICS .104	NEXT MONTH .119





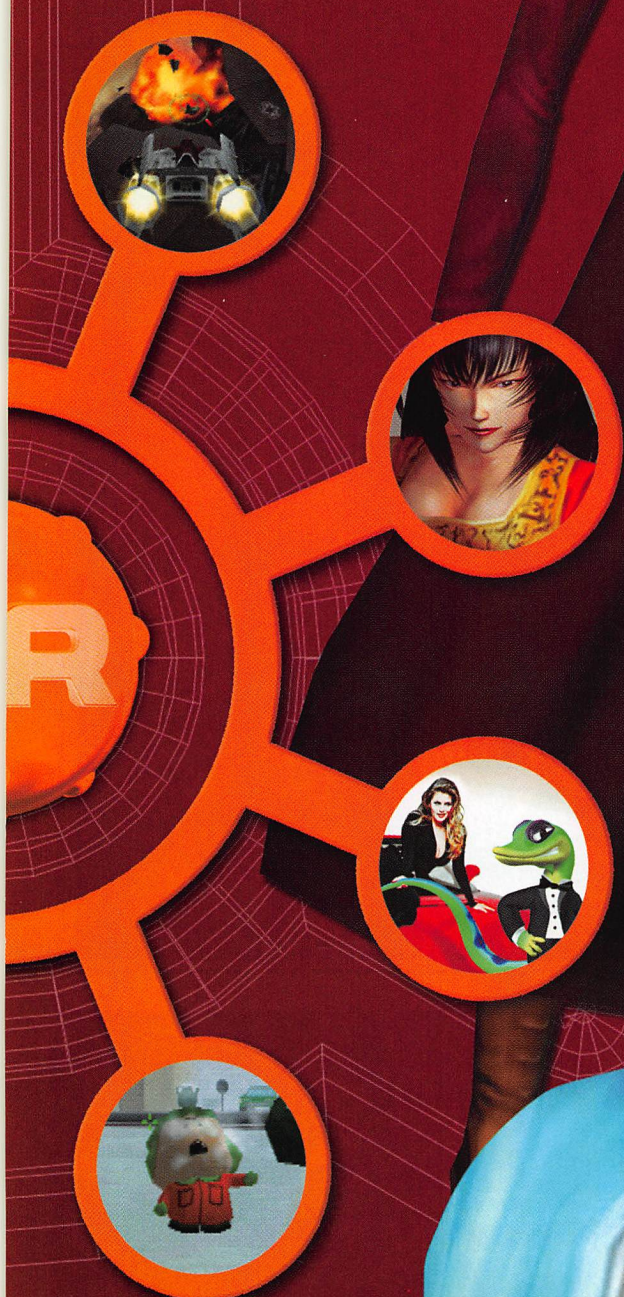
REARVIEW

SHENMUE .28

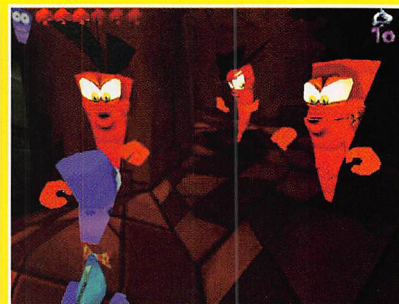
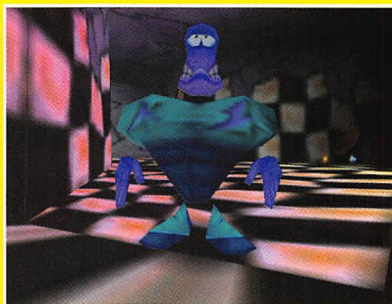
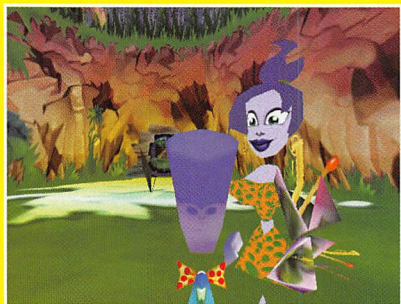
YU SUZUKI, THE MASTERMIND BEHIND THE EPOCHAL *VIRTUA FIGHTER* SERIES, IS CULTIVATING HIS KNOWLEDGE ON THE SCHOOL OF 3D FIGHTING DESIGN FOR A DREAMCAST PROJECT OF GROUND-BREAKING PROPORTIONS. PREPARE YOURSELF FOR WHAT NEW TECHNOLOGY, SOARING IMAGINATION — AND AN UNPRECEDENTED \$40 MILLION BUDGET — CAN CREATE.

FEATURING:

Abes 2	69	Rampage 2	41
Alpha Centuri	40	Rayman 2	22
Beetle Racing	54	Rogue Squadron	58
Charlie Blast	68	Rush Down	55
Contender	72	Seven Kingdoms 2	41
Dark Vengeance	66	ShenMue	28
Dead in the Water	69	Snowboard Kids 2	59
Descent 3	40	Sonic Adventure	42
Dirt	41	Soul of the Samurai	38
Gex 3	32	Soul Reaver	34
Giants	32	South Park	60
In the Zone '99	75	StarCraft: BW	67
Jeff Gordan XS Racing	73	Street Sk8er	55
Kingdoms	48	Syphon Filter	62
King's Quest: MoE	69	Tail Concerto	61
Legaia	36	TPA: Animaniacs	75
March Madness	75	Theif	67
MIB	56	Triple Play 2000	73
Monkey Hero	69	Turok 2	64
Myth 2	66	Turok: GB	56
NCAA Final Four	75	Uprising 2	65
Nectaris	69	Uprising X	68
Need for Speed 4	54	Warzone 2100	41
Quest for Camelot	56	Zelda DX	56



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*Be A Man
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It's Ed's mess and Ed's going to clean it up!

Ed's toxic goo turned the world crazy -- tomatoes are rioting, carrots are biting back, and Grögh the Hellish wants Ed's head. Help Ed right the wrongs in 12 wildly animated worlds -- insane puzzles, killer vegetables, dangerous dungeons, and more. All caused by Ed. It's the biggest trouble anyone's ever gotten into... or out of.



frontlines

SEGA'S SUZUKI SHOWS OFF SHENMUE'S STUFF!

The beautiful marine setting of the National Convention Hall of Yokohama was the perfect venue...

...for Yu Suzuki's December 20th *Shenmue* presentation. Being nearly Christmas, the whole waterfront area was full of festive illuminations and Sega themselves decorated the halls with tinsel.

With both a full orchestra and Xmas setting, the event attracted more than just the avid gamers; over half the attendees had never been to either the D2 or *Sonic Adventure* shows. Nevertheless, there were those who had been queuing from before 4:00 a.m. and by the time the doors opened, the line of people to get in had stretched right around the outside of the building. The first showing was at 10:00 a.m., but the 1:30 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. performances had even more people.

When the doors opened, everyone quickly entered the main entrance hall area where they could collect their goodies bag. As it was Christmas, the bag contained far more gifts than normal. In order of popularity, the *Shenmue* presents consisted of a CD single, T-shirt, painted figure, Xmas card,

memo pad, pamphlet and tattoo sheet.

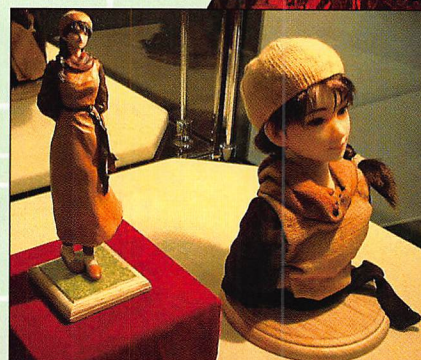
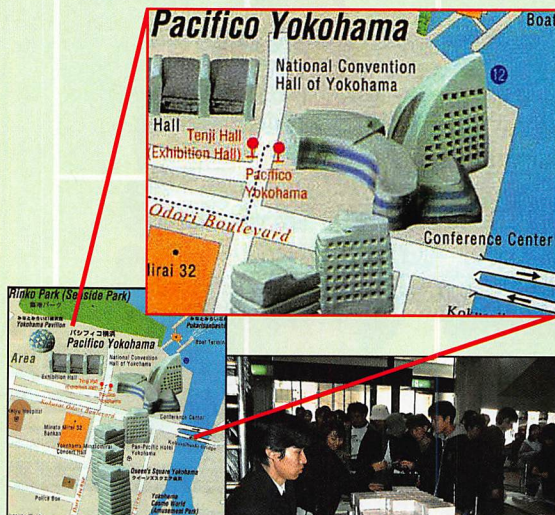
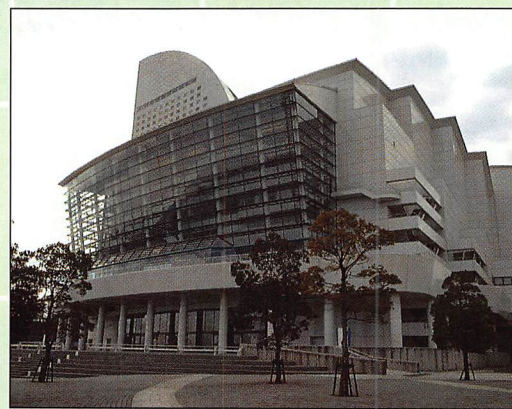
There was also a shop selling plenty of *Shenmue* goods, ranging from a ¥200 ball-point pen to a ¥2,500 B2-size calendar. Most of the goods, including the cup, poster, telephone card and mouse pad came in four different designs – a sketch of Ryo, Rei, Ren or Chouzhun.

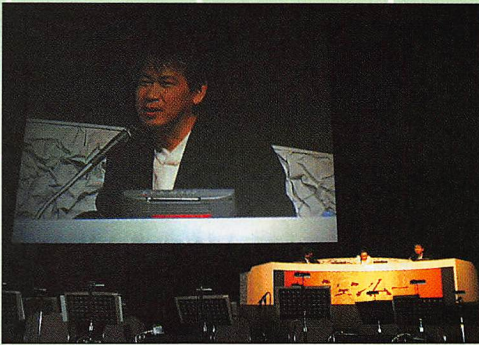
The most expensive item was a very large limited-edition framed picture of each of the same four main characters signed by Yu Suzuki, on sale for ¥50,000!

Sega also put out a large number of *Shenmue* print-club machines and some high-quality figures in display cabinets for everyone to see. They were originals and far superior to the figure that everyone received.



Look at the cool Print Club photos to be had at the show!





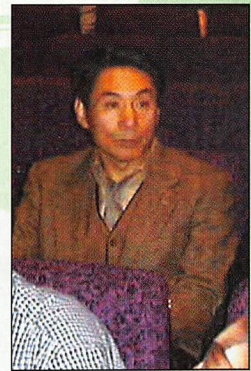
The main hall, which held 5,000 people, had a stage area consisting of one giant screen in the middle and two smaller screens to each side. In front of the stage was the orchestra. Amongst the crowds was quite a number of famous people, including Mr. Eno (Warp), Mr. Okamoto (Capcom) and Sega's president, Mr. Irimajiri.

The performance started with the Kanagawa Philharmonic Orchestra, with Mr. Hiroshi Kumiage (conductor) playing for about 30 minutes. Their four songs were "The Theme of Shenmue," "The Theme of Shenhua," with vocals from Ms. Iori, "China, Land of Eternity" and, finally, a special orchestral compilation. The center of attention was a lady who played a traditional Chinese instrument.

Next, Mr. Shigeaki Saegusa (a music composer), Ms. Reiko Chiba (a game producer) and Yu Suzuki came on stage and started to talk about Shenmue. Sitting behind a special booth, the three of them would spend the rest of the show chatting about the game before introducing video clips.

First of all, they showed the image movie (on the demo disk) that Yu Suzuki created

two years ago. Next was a mini-documentary of Sega's trips to China in order to gather materials needed to create *Shenmue*. The video continuously blended real video with game scenes to show how realistic *Shenmue* is.



Sega's president Mr. Irimajiri enjoys the show with the rest of the crowd.



This was followed by some behind-the-scenes footage of AM2 creating *Shenmue*. The video showed their design sketches, motion capture technology and modeling techniques.

After that was an introduction of all the main characters in the game, along with a

description of some of the major locations. The main game system was explained, with Yu Suzuki using four Dreamcast units to show how the weather and time works in *Shenmue*. Finally, he demonstrated how the battles take place.

In the final stage event, four voice actors came on stage and were interviewed by the two MCs. After that, Yukawa Shenmue appeared and joked that if *Shenmue* was a success, he might be re-promoted.

The show ended with a Santa handing out *Shenmue* balloons to everyone as they left the show.



Mr. Shenmue addresses the crowd. Work it, baby!



GR STAMPS DREAMCAST PASSPORT

Let's put an end to the controversy right now and say flat out that, yes, you can use your Dreamcast to surf the web! It does...

...involve a bit of herky jerky action, but after several failed attempts at connecting with the Japanese server (something that must be done before you can use the browser), we were finally able to get through with a bit of jack swapping and skulduggery with the phone's handset. You'll be able to find all the details of this black magic on our website. It's not really that difficult, but without a working knowledge of Japanese and kanji, it's next to impossible.



Once we submitted some spurious info to the Japanese server, the *Dream Passport* software allowed us to input our own ISP information (something you must have for this to work) and we were off checking e-mail and looking at Sega of Japan's homepage. As an added bonus, the DC automatically decodes Japanese text (naturally) so you can look at Japanese sites with no gibberish. Eventually, we made our way to the GR site, only to be disappointed at the lack of Flash support, but we weren't really expecting that to work anyway. Other than that, the browser's not half bad. It's fairly speedy, supports IRC and is generally easy to use



with the pad and keyboard working in concert.

If you've got an existing ISP account and a DC, then you've got your own handy little 33.6k TV surfing box. As a caveat, though, you really need to be running your DC through RGB or S-Video, or text tends to blur quite horribly.

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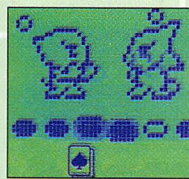
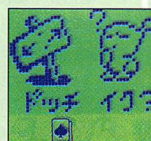
CHAO DOWN ON VMS

With Sonic fever running rampant through the GR offices, the bleating of the little VMS...

...A-life game can be heard from all directions. *Chao no Osanpo*



Adventure (Chao's Walking Adventure) lets you carry around a little Chao that you hatch in one of Sonic's three egg rooms. And once you download one into your VMS, you can name it and watch as it walks, swims, and flies through a multipath quest, encountering other Chao

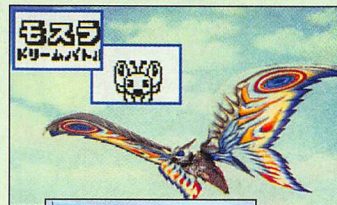


in battle, coming across treasure chests, and playing a little game of Concentration to build up its attributes. You can then take it back into *Sonic Adventure* and race it against CPU Chao's or your friend's Chao loaded in from his or her VMS. You can't control the little fellows, but you can boost them along at certain intervals. You can also mutate your Chao's by rubbing rescued Flickies on them - very weird and highly addictive.

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I DREAM OF MOTHRA

On sale in Japan over the Christmas and New Year holiday was General Entertainment's latest game...



...*Mothra Dream Battle*. Available in a special limited-edition boxed set with a small painted figure of King-Ghidorah, the game is part one of a special series where you will be able to battle the greatest monsters from TOHO and DAIEI.

Part two comes out in March next year, with *Gamera Dream Battle*. The two games have been planned to coincide with the release of the movies *Mothra 3* and *Gamera 3*, respectively, and will be available at both cinema and game shops. The basic idea is that you play each game individually to raise your most powerful monster through a special tournament series of battles. After that, you'll be able to take your *MDB* and *GDB* Visual Memory games and put them together for the ultimate battle!

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DREAMCAST TIME



In order to promote the Dreamcast and encourage people to buy as many games as possible, Sega have

been running the "1 to 3 Campaign" in Japan. All Dreamcast games purchased between Nov. 27 and Dec. 31 had a special token on the CD sleeve that could be cut out and attached to a special campaign card. You could then take this card to the game shop where you bought your games and exchange it for a limited-edition Dreamcast Alarm Clock! Another cool promotion was the Yukawa mobile phone straps, which featured a little super-deformed Mr. Yukawa!

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TGS DETAILS

New details about the TGS '99 Spring (March 19-21) reveal that the largest booths go to Sega, SCE, SNK, Capcom and Bandai, followed next by From Software, Square, Konami, Namco, Taito and Banpresto. Most of the big booths are in the central building with the smaller booths in the East and West buildings.



...AND "DAI-RANTOU" THE BIG BRAWL SHOUTING!

Nintendo appear to be on one long winning streak at the moment, having personally had...

...a fantastic 18 months. Now with the imminent release of *Mario Party* (Feb 8) here in the U.S., we

can reveal another potentially cracking game going by the name of All-

Star Dai-Rantou *Smash Brothers*, which is being developed by HAL Laboratories (close affiliates of NO).

The gameplay concentrates around pitched battles in large open arenas, using long-ranged attacks (similar to those found in *Destrega*). A rather unusual lineup of Nintendo characters is available, comprised of Mario, Donkey Kong, Yoshi, Link, Kirby, Fox McCloud, Samus and Pikachu. The guys have the

obligatory differences in statistics

and weaponry, and all in all, *Smash Brothers* looks set to be an outrageous four-player laugh-riot. More on the Japanese release next month.

But for those who don't have an N64, help is at hand with this giant inflatable Mario, where you can play *Smash Brothers* for real! Inside the giant Mario you can leap about and smash your friends before watching them bounce off the walls! Recommended for young children and virtual reality maniacs, and psycho-blokes as well!

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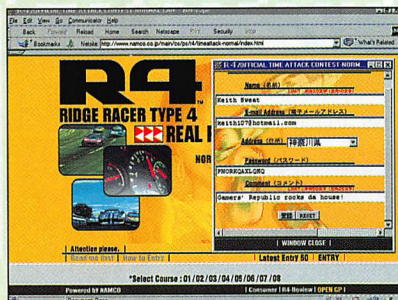
THE ONLINE OF SPEED

Adding yet more gameplay to *Ridge Racer Type 4*, Namco of Japan have...

...recently revealed an in-game secret that allows the players to enter their best lap-times on Namco's Japanese website.

The procedure is simple: race your fastest car in the Time Attack mode, and once the race is over, you can press Square and Triangle on the Retry screen to reveal a hidden password. Now go to www.namco.com (on a computer, of course!) and locate the R4 Time Attack page. Click on Entry and fill out the form. Your time will now be entered into a huge on-line database, giving you the chance to be the King of the Road against some of the best players from Japan. Are you a real Ridge Racer?

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RALLY TO JAPAN

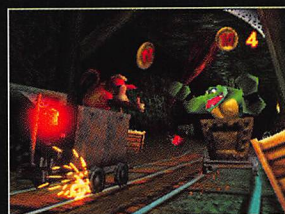
Colin McRae's Rally from Codemasters still remains unreleased and unknown in the U.S. Japan, however, will be next to receive this excellent PlayStation driving sim that has enjoyed immense success in Europe. Slightly renamed to Colin McRae The Rally, the Japanese certainly show more interest in this exciting, underrated motor sport than we Americans, but hopefully a U.S. release will follow shortly. The release date is March 11.



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RARE HERO 4

At long last, Rare have confirmed that they have been working on a 64-bit *Donkey Kong* game for the N64. After much speculation by the press and the usual surreptitiousness from those skilled UK developers, we can bring you the first screen shot from the game. Don't expect to see the game until the latter half of the year, because if there is one thing Rare are more famous for than creating top games, it's taking a bloody long time to get them out!



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"I'M THE KING OF THE UNDERWORLD!"

Artlink are known well for their bizarre, original PlayStation creations such as *The Aquanaut's Holiday* and *Wild Pure Simple Life*. It seems now that they are venturing into new territories with *Vampire*, a gothic RPG tale of terror. Obviously, we look forward to bringing you the game in much more detail, but we just wanted to point out that the main character, Christopher, has been separated at birth from Leonardo DiCaprio!

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CARMACK BAPTIZES THE MAC!

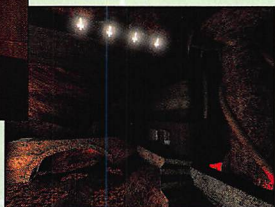
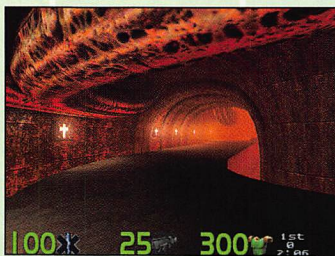
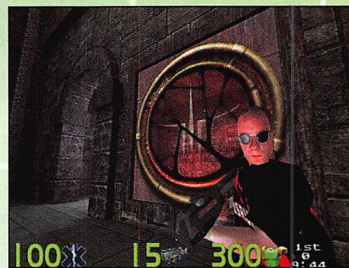
"I'm here today because Apple finally has their act together with regards to 3D graphics acceleration, both hardware and software..."

John Carmack, co-founder and owner of id Software, starts a revolutionary speech at MacWorld Expo 1999. The enraptured Mac enthusiasts listened to the brilliant blond-haired legend as he laid out his new plan for Mac support. He announced that *Heretic 2*, *Sin*, and *Quake 2* ports are

in progress, which drew applause from the game-starved Mac press, but the big news was the announcement that *Quake Arena* is being developed simultaneously for the PC and Mac!

Carmack continues, "...there is no reason that the Mac won't be an absolutely perfect gaming platform for anything you want to do." Woah! There is only 15k of Mac-specific code in *Quake Arena*, so development tests on the Mac are just a simple compile away, making a simultaneous release a reality. Let the anticipation commence!

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STRAP ONE ON!

Just one week after Digicube, a distributor of game software and peripherals, conducted a FFVIII sales campaign at 17,600 retail stores across Japan, the reservations had

neared 700,000 copies. The rate of reservations is growing

at the same pace as FFVII did, and the company expects the numbers to reach, if not surpass, the previous record of 1.5 million. To sweeten the pre-order deal, every buyer will receive a special strap as a commemoration.

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VISITORS' HOURS

Visitor is Japan's first full 3D CG movie (84 min.), based on a story where two office ladies...



...must save the Earth from an invasion from outer space. The film has already been broadcast on WOWOW, one of Japan's satellite channels, and is currently being sold on video, LD and DVD. Vol. 1 is already out with Vol. 2 and 3 planned for release later this year. Vantan International are now working on a Dreamcast game based on this movie and are advertising for game designers and programmers to work on the project. The game is scheduled for a June release.

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SONY SIGNS SWAN!

The distribution system for Bandai's forthcoming Wonderswan portable has been changed from Sega Muse to one managed by SCEI (Sony Computer Entertainment International).

Although Bandai had announced that they would use Sega's distribution channel at a press conference held on November 19, they've since had a change of heart. Reportedly, Sega are so intent on making the Dreamcast a success

they can hardly spare the time and money that would be involved in distributing a whole new piece of hardware.

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REPUBLIC VOICES IN VIDEO GAMES

Those who have been unfortunate enough to speak to Gamers' Republic's overseas editor already know about his tendencies to scream...

...hideously when things go wrong, so it's not surprising that he recently paid a trip to Koei's sound studio to have his wailing recorded for their new N64 game, *Winback*. Many thanks to Ms. Kaori Nakabai (left) and Mr. Mahito Yokota (right) for putting up with him for the day.



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BUST A CONSOLE!

Hoping to cash in on Konami's success, Enix have brought *Bust a Move* to the arcade with a joint venture between Atlus and Namco. Atlus have the official *Bust A Move* license and are producing the game with Namco providing technical support for their System 12 hardware.



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DANCE TAKES OVER!

As dance fever grips Japan, Konami's *Dance Dance Revolution* is beginning to take over many arcades across the country. Despite its large size, it still returns more money than the standard coin-op cabinet, so it's not unusual to find multiple units available for play. At one place we found five in a row, and there was another one outside as well!



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This guy is searching for his next meal—and you're it.



Watch where you tread—torturous traps await the unwary adventurer.



Whip your way through Dracula's army of the undead.

Killer outfit. Too bad the night life sucks.

Get geared up for the bloodiest vampire battles ever. In *Castlevania's* 12th incarnation, you enter a tangled, trap-filled castle populated by the evil Count and his minions. Go as one of two fearless fighters of your choice, equipped with whoop-ass weaponry. But be warned, while you can dress to kill, if you lack the skill—your night is really gonna suck.



1-900-896-HINT (4468) www.konami.com \$0.95 per minute charge, \$1.25 per minute support from game counselor. Touch tone phone required. Minors must have parental permission before dialing. Hints are available 24 hours a day. Live support Monday - Friday 8:30am to 4:30pm PST only. Prices and availability subject to change. U.S. accessibility only. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. Nintendo 64 and the 3-D 'N' logo are trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc. ©1998 Nintendo of America Inc. CASTLEVANIA and Konami are registered trademarks of Konami Co., Ltd. ©1998 Konami of America, Inc. All Rights Reserved.





SHEDDING THEIR SKIN

Having exited the throngs of Acclaim, Jeff Spangenberg, the original founder of...

...Iguana, has taken up residence in Austin with his brand new company, Retro Gaming (the name implies old-school gameplay with next-generation visuals). They are no ordinary new developer: Because of their past industry prowess, Nintendo of America have taken a vested interest in the new *uber-developer*, in a similar fashion to their deal with RARE. Therefore, Nintendo will be publishing all of the new company's software. No word yet as to what Retro's first offerings will be, but the Republic will be closely following the fruition of this exciting new company.

DC DELAYS, SHENMUE SUPER COST!

Climax Landers: February 25 to June 10, '99

Get Bass: February to April 1, '99

Hudson's White Illumination: February to mid Mar. '99

Konami's Pop n' Music: February 25 to April 1, '99

Konami's Flight Shooting: Spring '99

House of The Dead 2: March 18, '99

Shenmue is destined to be the most expensive game project ever. Rumors state that the total production cost is 4.5 Billion Yen. That's over \$40 million U.S.!

PLAYSTATION ON MAC?!?

Connectix Corporation announced the release of *Connectix Virtual Game Station*...

...a software emulator that enables some PS games to run on Macintosh G3 computers. *Virtual Game Station* comes with ready-to-use support for your keyboard and mouse and supports input devices, such as game pads and joysticks. According to Roy McDonald, President of Connectix, "*Connectix Virtual Game Station* is designed to enable users to run some of the world's most popular games right on their Macintosh and should significantly expand the gaming possibilities for the Macintosh platform. While the product is not a perfect substitute for PS consoles, we believe that our customers will be pleased with the experience of using games with *Connectix Virtual Game Station* on their Macs." The *Virtual Game Station* is set to retail for \$49, with a PC version forthcoming. For a list of games that have been tested for use on the *Virtual Game Station*, check out www.virtualgamestation.com/games.html.

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Connectix *Virtual Game Station*™

ABE GETS FREAKY IN GERMANY

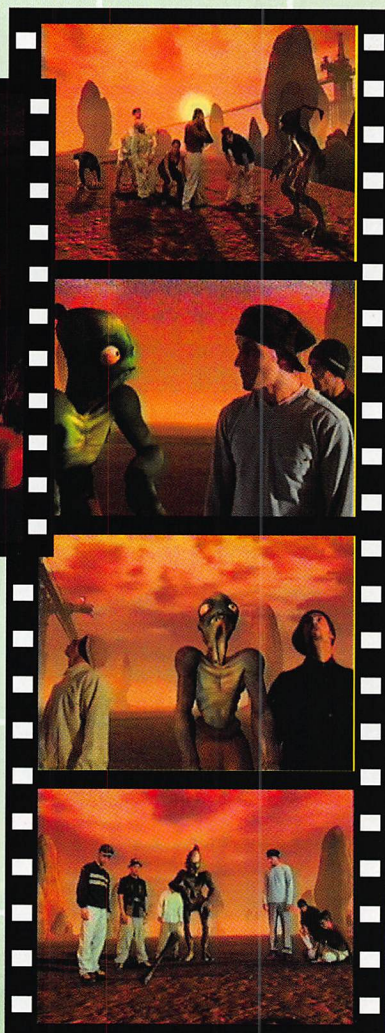
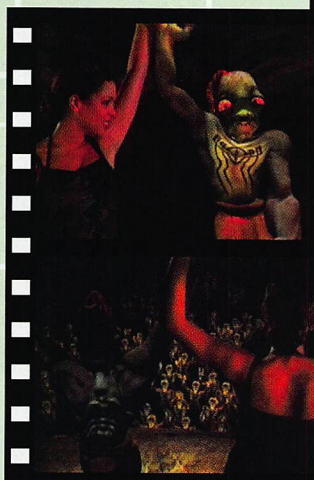
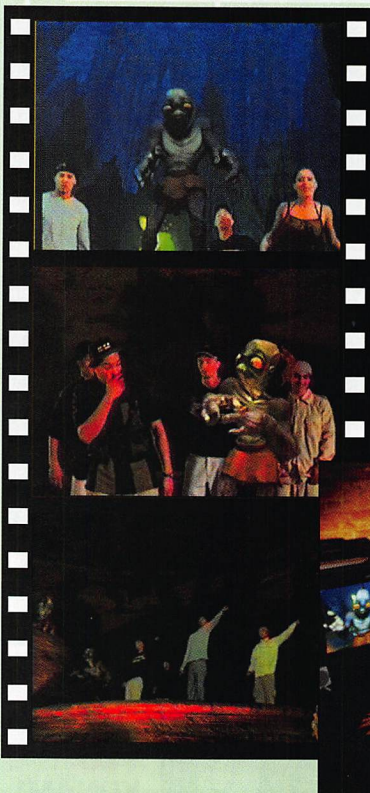
The German Rap group Music Instructor have released a music single and video for their single "Get Freaky"...

...based on the Oddworld Inhabitants game *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*. It's a catchy tune; so much so that the single went platinum last December! And the video, which is in heavy

rotation on both German MTV and Viva, is catchy as well: it uses the rendered cinematics of the new game with the members of the group in place of Abe's Mudokon friends, and manages to not only time the rendered graphics with the new music but tell Abe's story in a new form as well.

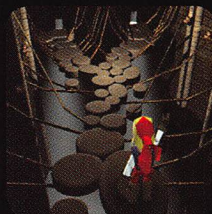
At the same time that "Get Freaky" went Platinum, Abe's *Exoddus* managed to break the 100,000 sales mark for the German market! Oddworld Inhabitants' President Sherry McKenna and CEO Lorne Lanning have travelled to Hamberg, Germany, in February to receive honors and accolades for both of these achievements, and to show their support of their Germanic friends and fans across the Atlantic. "Ich bin ein Mudoken!"

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stop it before
it multiplies.

[the plague.]



[not the praise.]

["Stunning spell effects" —*EGM*]

["Deep, involving storyline...beautiful graphics" —*GamePro*]

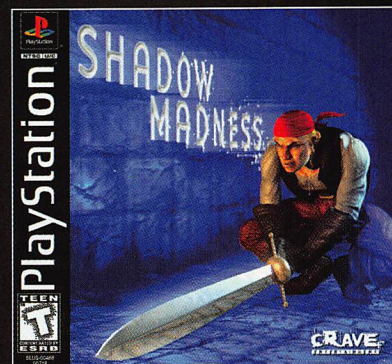
["Beautifully rendered" —*Next Generation*]

["Loaded with exquisite music." —*Gamer's Republic*]

["Unravels like a good mystery...epic" —*PSM*]

["A highly interactive world." —*PSExtreme*]

[www.shadowmadness.com]



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COMPLETE



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from the Official Hintbook!
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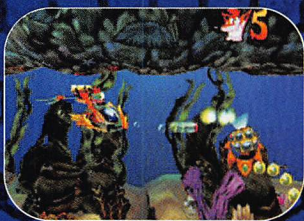
database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATS



top ten best selling playstation titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD NOVEMBER 1998



- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 CRASH BANDICOOT: WARPED SONY | 6 METAL GEAR SOLID KONAMI |
| 2 TOMB RAIDER 3 EIDOS | 7 MADDEN '99 EA |
| 3 RUGRATS THQ | 8 KNOCKOUT KINGS EA |
| 4 NASCAR '99 EA | 9 CRASH BANDICOOT 2 SONY |
| 5 TWISTED METAL 3 989 STUDIOS | 10 A BUG'S LIFE SONY |

He's number one and nine in the U.S. and number two in Japan! The universally loved Bandicoot marches on!

top ten best selling nintendo64 titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD NOVEMBER 1998

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT NINTENDO | 6 SUPER MARIO 64 NINTENDO |
| 2 SW ROGUE SQUADRON LUCASARTS | 7 MARIO KART 64 NINTENDO |
| 3 GOLDENEYE 007 NINTENDO | 8 MADDEN NFL '99 EA |
| 4 WCW/NWO REVENGE THQ | 9 NASCAR '99 EA |
| 5 NFL BLITZ MIDWAY | 10 BANJO-KAZOOIE NINTENDO |

No big surprise here — Zelda's all that, and everyone loves Star Wars! Will Goldeneye ever stop selling?



top ten best selling saturn titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD NOVEMBER 1998



- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 NHL '97 EA | 6 NASCAR '98 EA |
| 2 MADDEN '97 EA | 7 MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH WD |
| 3 SONIC 3D BLAST SEGA | 8 MADDEN NFL '98 EA |
| 4 NBA LIVE '98 EA | 9 SCUD SEGA |
| 5 GRID RUNNER VIRGIN | 10 MYST ACCLAIM |

Wow, Grid Runner is back! You know it's nearly over when games such as this and Myst make the charts.

top ten best selling pc titles

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD NOVEMBER 1998

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 DEER HUNTER 2 WIZARDWORKS | 6 HOT WHEELS MATTTEL |
| 2 LEGO ISLAND MINDSCAPE | 7 AGE OF EMPIRES: RoR MS |
| 3 COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR MS | 8 RUGRATS BRODERBUND |
| 4 HALF-LIFE SIERRA | 9 FLIGHT SIM 98 MS |
| 5 CABELA'S B.G.H. HEADGAMES | 10 RAILROAD TYCOON TAKE2 |

The PC market is one strange puppy. Sitting at number one and two, a game where you kill innocent creatures in cold blood and a baby game? Broken!



top ten overall console

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD NOVEMBER 1998



- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT-N64 NINTENDO | 6 WCW/NWO REVENGE-N64 THQ |
| 2 ROGUE SQUADRON-N64 LUCASARTS | 7 RUGRATS-PS THQ |
| 3 CRASH BANDICOOT 3-PS SONY | 8 NASCAR '99-PS EA |
| 4 GOLDENEYE 007-N64 NINTENDO | 9 TWISTED METAL 3-PS 989 STUDIOS |
| 5 TOMB RAIDER 3-PS EIDOS | 10 METAL GEAR SOLID-PS KONAMI |

world republic top ten games



japan



- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 DUEL MONSTERS GB | 6 POKEMON CARD GB GB |
| 2 CRASH BANDICOOT 3 PS | 7 MARIO PARTY N64 |
| 3 PIKACHU GENKIDECHU N64 | 8 GENSOU SUIKODEN II PS |
| 4 GUNDAM SHAR PS | 9 DRAGONQUEST MONSTERS GB |
| 5 EHRGEIZ PS | 10 ATELIER ELIE PS |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1998

united kingdom



- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 ZELDA:OoT N64 | 6 SPYRO THE DRAGON PS |
| 2 FIFA '99 PS/PC | 7 ABE'S EXODDUS PS |
| 3 TOMB RAIDER 3 PS | 8 TOCA 2 PS |
| 4 CRASH BANDICOOT PS | 9 TEKKEN 3 PS |
| 5 BRIAN LARA CRICKET PS | 10 SMALL SOLDIERS PS |

RANKED ON UNITS SOLD THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 1998

gamers' republic top ten games

BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH JANUARY 15



d. halverson



- | |
|------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 ZELDA:OoT N64 |
| 3 RAYMAN 2 N64/PC |
| 4 TONIC TROUBLE N64 |
| 5 GANBARE GOEMON 2 N64 |
| 6 TUROK 2 N64 |
| 7 ZELDA DX GBC |
| 8 SOUTH PARK N64 |
| 9 GEX 3 PS |
| 10 GUARDIAN CRUSADE PS |



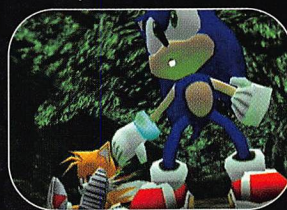
b. williams



- | |
|--------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 ZELDA:OoT N64 |
| 3 ZELDA DX GBC |
| 4 ROGUE SQUADRON N64 |
| 5 TETRIS DX GBC |
| 6 COLIN McRAES' RALLY PS |
| 7 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 PS |
| 8 VF3tb DC |
| 9 DORAEMON 2 N64 |
| 10 SF ZERO 3 PS |



b. siechter



- | |
|-------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 ZELDA:OoT N64 |
| 3 SF ZERO 3 PS |
| 4 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 PS |
| 5 TOMB RAIDER 3 PS |
| 6 PUZZLE FIGHTER PS |
| 7 SNOWBOARD KIDS 2 N64 |
| 8 PEN PEN TRICELON DC |
| 9 VF3tb DC |
| 10 GANBARE GOEMON 2 N64 |



d. rees



- | |
|-------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 MYTH 2 PC |
| 3 BALDUR'S GATE PC |
| 4 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 PS |
| 5 VF3tb DC |
| 6 SYPHON FILTER PS |
| 7 HALF-LIFE PC |
| 8 GIANTS PC |
| 9 TUROK 2 N64 |
| 10 TRIBES PC |



m. hobbs



- | |
|-------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 PS |
| 3 ROGUE SQUADRON N64 |
| 4 ZELDA:OoT N64 |
| 5 R-TYPE DELTA PS |
| 6 ZELDA DX GBC |
| 7 SF ZERO 3 PS |
| 8 VF3tb DC |
| 9 CHAO NO OSANPO VMS-DC |
| 10 GUNDAM: B.B.P. PS |



g. harrod



- | |
|-----------------------|
| 1 STARCRAFT: BW PC |
| 2 MYTH 2 PC |
| 3 SILENT HILL PS |
| 4 SF ZERO 3 PS |
| 5 HALF-LIFE PC |
| 6 ROGUE SQUADRON N64 |
| 7 GENSO SUIKODEN 2 PS |
| 8 VF3tb DC |
| 9 SIN PC |
| 10 C&C PC |



r. lockhart



- | |
|-------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 BALDUR'S GATE PC |
| 3 STARCRAFT: BW PC |
| 4 MYTH 2 PC |
| 5 THIEF PC |
| 6 SF ZERO 3 PS |
| 7 HALF-LIFE PC |
| 8 DF2: JEDI KNIGHT PC |
| 9 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 PS |
| 10 GRIM FANDANGO PC |



m. griffin



- | |
|--------------------------|
| 1 SONIC ADVENTURE DC |
| 2 EVERQUEST PC |
| 3 TAIL CONCERTO PS |
| 4 R-TYPE DELTA PS |
| 5 RIDGE RACER TYPE 4 N64 |
| 6 THRILL KILL PS |
| 7 CHAO NO OSANPO VMS-DC |
| 8 EHRGEIZ PS |
| 9 ZELDA: OoT N64 |
| 10 ROGUE SQUADRON N64 |

Now that you've read, seen, and heard as much as you can possibly stomach on the launch of Sega's new Dreamcast console, this month TechFront is proud to present – you guessed it – yet more on the Dreamcast. However, rather than going into more of the “what it's like” that you've been seeing so much of, we'll focus this month on the “why it's like that.” Having discussed what the specs meant in theory, now that we've actually had a chance to try out the Dreamcast in person, it's time to talk about how the theory has translated into reality. And before I jump into a column that will tend to devote a great deal of attention to details, let me say that my overall initial impressions of the Dreamcast hardware have been very positive. Seeing everything running in high resolution, with lush, detailed textures, bilinear filtering, and (for the most part) nice lighting effects leaves little doubt that the Dreamcast is ushering in the next generation of consoles. Turning on my Dreamcast to see *Virtua Fighter 3* on my TV for the first time was, minor glitches notwithstanding, amazingly gratifying.

Before I dive into the technical issues, I would like to digress for a moment to present TechFront's Dreamcast Launch Awards, to commemorate a few of the things that jumped out at me while playing the first month's worth of Dreamcast games:

Most Aesthetic Moment: A tie between *Sonic Adventure*'s killer whale and *Incoming*'s UFO explosions.

Subtlest Use of Obscene Numbers of Polygons: *Sonic Adventure*'s endless, smoothly twisting tracks.

Coollest Effect: *Virtua Fighter 3*'s motion blur.

Most Blatant Glitch: A tie between *Virtua Fighter 3*'s shattered shadows and *Sonic Adventure*'s Below-The-Floor-Vue (™).

the programmers weren't familiar enough with the Dreamcast hardware to really take advantage of it (especially given that they had a rather inflexible deadline to meet). Mr. Robison also stated that he has seen some games in development which have substantially higher quality human figures than the *Virtua Fighter 3* port, so with any luck, we may soon see some tangible evidence that given the development time, the Dreamcast could have produced the perfect *Virtua Fighter 3* port that it was supposed to have been capable of. Although Mr. Robison was unwilling to confirm it, based on the most recent footage we've seen, we suspect the game he was referring to may have been Yu Suzuki's epic project *Shenmue* – its graphics, and in particular, the detail of its human figures, are truly stunning.

Light and Shadow

In our TechFront Dreamcast spread from the September issue, I spent some time discussing modifier volumes, a hardware effect designed to produce realistic light beams and shadows. Theoretically, modifier volumes provide a way of casting shadows accurately onto any surface. I was therefore confused and a little worried that among the first group of Dreamcast games, there was little uniformity in terms of shadow appearances, and worse, in

Virtua Fighter 3, the shadows consistently break up. In the worst case, this could have been an indication of problems in the hardware implementation of modifier volumes (not dissimilar from the polygon seams created by the Playstation hardware). Happily, Mr. Robison informed me that none of the Sega games actually used modifier volumes at all, trying rather to use more standard software solutions, presumably because a significant portion



"Virtua Fighter 3 suffers from very serious shadow breakup on anything other than completely flat horizontal terrain."

In Model 3's Shadow

Given that Sega has been touting the Dreamcast as fully capable of pixel-perfect Model 3 ports, it's little wonder that a lot of attention has been focused on the port of *Virtua Fighter 3*, and the fact that while it is impressive, it is noticeably inferior to its Model 3 parent. The biggest difference is in the character models, which are visibly blocky, particularly when the camera zooms in after a victory. I asked Neal Robison, the director of developer support (and technical evangelist) at Sega of America what his take on the situation was, and he reiterated Sega's position that the Dreamcast is more powerful than Model3, both in rendering ability and in CPU power. He suggested that the reason for the polygon drop in the *Virtua Fighter 3* port was that since the Dreamcast architecture is so different from the Model 3 architecture, the port pretty much had to be recoded completely, and



The biggest difference (between Model 3 and DC) is in the character models, which are visibly blocky, particularly when the camera zooms in.

of these early games were developed before the Dreamcast hardware was actually finalized. This also explains why shadows are so different in different games. *Sonic* has the now-standard paste-a-transparent-circle-on-the-ground shadows featured in *Mario* and any number of other games. *Seventh Cross* also has circular shadows, but these are actually cast properly onto uneven terrain, giving them a much more realistic effect. The best of the group would have to be *Incoming*, with accurately shaped shadows that change correctly on uneven terrain. And, of course, there's also *Virtua Fighter 3*, which attempts to do the same thing, but suffers from very serious shadow breakup on anything other than completely flat horizontal terrain. Soon we'll start seeing games whose development didn't get seriously underway until the Dreamcast hardware was pretty much finalized, and hopefully this will not only mean taking better advantage of the hardware for higher polygon counts and that sort of thing, but also of the specialized features like modifier volumes, which could make *Incoming*-quality shadows (or better) a run-of-the-mill experience.



TECH FRONT



THE DREAMCAST BECOMES A REALITY

BY BRIAN OSSERMAN



"Seeing everything running in high resolution, with lush, detailed textures, bilinear filtering, and nice lighting effects leaves little doubt that the Dreamcast is ushering in the next generation of consoles."



If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for topics you'd like to see covered, please e-mail: techfront@gamersrepublic.com.

Limitations of Televisions

One of the first things that jumps out about the new Dreamcast games is that as promised, they're all in high resolution. As mentioned in the January column on frame rates, this brings up a number of problems, mostly stemming from the fact that televisions are unable to display high resolution graphics at 60 frames per second, and have to use interlacing to do high resolution at all. As anyone who played *Virtua Fighter 2* on the Saturn noticed, this can create a significant amount of flickering, even to the point of giving headaches to people who don't have problems with most games. As mentioned in the TechFront Dreamcast column from the September issue, the Dreamcast boasts a special digital video encoder (the component which actually creates the video signal) that is designed to create as stable an image as possible. This is one of those things that can only be evaluated by actually seeing it in action, but after seeing the first Dreamcast games, I'm pleased to be able to say that the effect is very substantial, and flicker in high resolution modes seems to be essentially a thing of the past.

A second problem associated with the limitations of televisions will only be apparent either to people who have very sharp sets or who use video capture hardware. Since a television can only display 60 half-frames a second, games that run at 60 frames per second can only display half of each frame; at any given time, the television is displaying parts of two frames, on alternating lines. On a sharp enough TV, this means that vertical edges that move quickly will break up in a comb-like effect.

Of course, all of these television limitations will be bypassed by those

who get the VGA Box peripheral, which allows you to hook your Dreamcast up to a VGA monitor to see the high resolution, 60 frames-per-second action in its full glory. Not all games support it, though: so far, it looks like most third party games haven't had VGA support. Contrary to some speculation, the fact that it is a VGA "Box" doesn't mean it is doing anything complicated; rather, the VGA Box will be something of an all-in-one adapter, with output plugs for composite video, S-Video, VGA, and speakers.

One last minor point is that you may have noticed that *Sonic Adventure* doesn't use trilinear filtering, opting instead to do bilinear filtering with regular mip-mapping. This produces a visible effect of lines along the ground where the textures on the close side are noticeably more detailed than the ones on the far side. Mr. Robison said that this decision was made because

Sonic moves so fast that people aren't likely to notice it very much, but he also said that Sega of America has been pushing the trilinear filtering very heavily, so you can expect to see a fair amount of it when the Dreamcast debuts in the U.S. (On a side note, this is your cue to say, "But doesn't the Nintendo 64 do trilinear filtering?" While it is technically an available feature, it appears that most games don't even use mip-mapping; look at the tree trunks in *Zelda* at a distance and you'll see a lot of flickering, and the staircases produce a very visible curved Moire pattern at a distance). Mr. Robison also said that SoA has been encouraging developers to make use of features like bump mapping, so it's looking like there will be some cool new effects on display when the Dreamcast hits American shores.

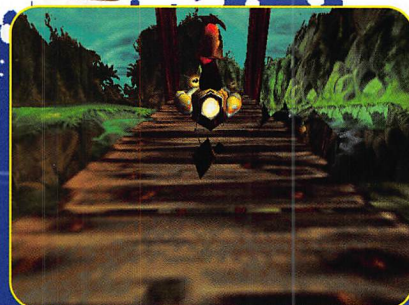
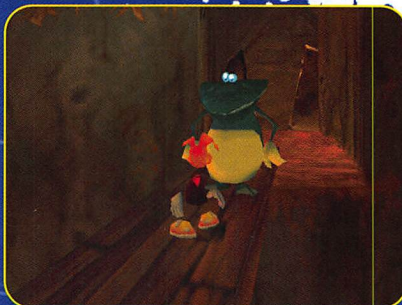


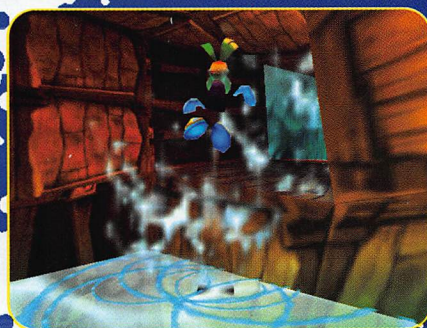
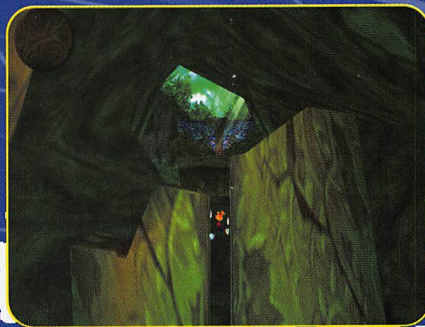
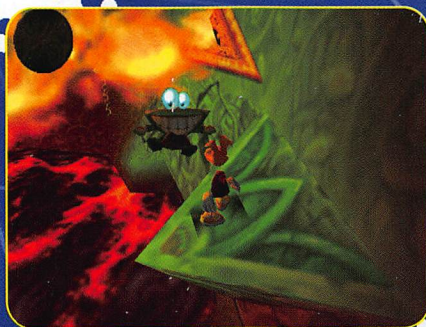
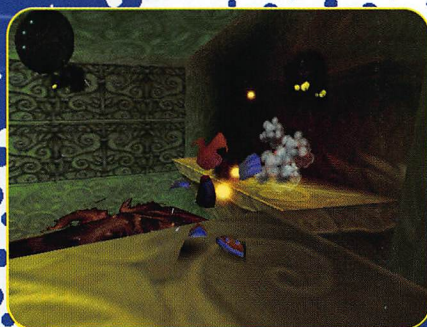


RAYMAN 2

THE GREAT ESCAPE

BY DAVE HALVERSON

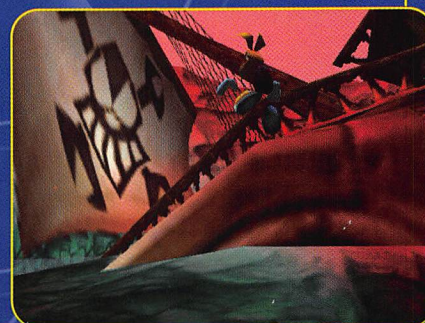


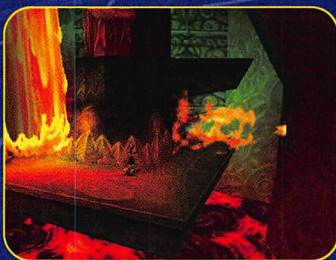


T

his spring will mark the return of Ubi Soft's *Rayman*, one of platforming's most beloved characters.

Originally released in '95 across four platforms (the Atari Jaguar, PlayStation, Saturn, and PC) and currently part of the PlayStation Greatest Hits lineup, this sequel has been a long time in coming. But with over 100 people crafting this magical 3D follow-up over a two-year development cycle, I can assure you it will be well worth the wait. Unlike *Tonic Trouble* – Ubi's newest addition to their fantastical adventure team, which boasts a larger-scope game on PC – *Rayman 2* is being designed specifically for the PC and Nintendo 64 (using the new Expansion Pak) simultaneously, taking full advantage of the N64's newfound power. So, besides screen resolution, the two games will be identical. Translation: Nintendo 64 owners will soon have even more reason to celebrate.





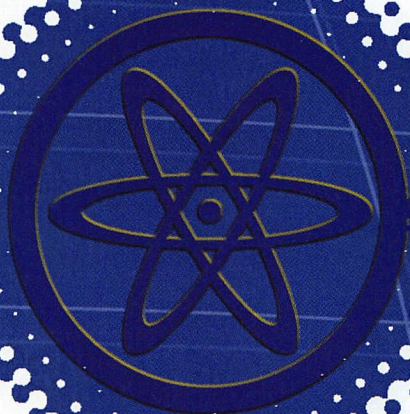
This fiery cavern features a massive rotating column, flowing lava, and shoots fire. Scaling the spinning edifice takes patience and skill. Rayman 2 is suitably populated with platforming elements such as this, as well as plenty of adventure.

A Magical Game is at hand

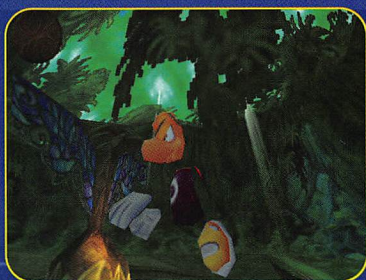
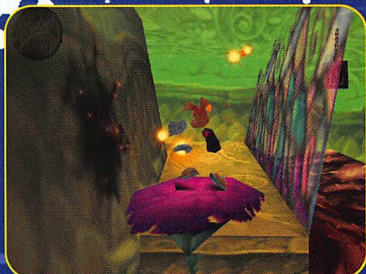
Rayman 2 is an expressive, fluid, and totally engrossing 3D fantasy. Like a vivid dream come to life, it has the ability to transport the player into its fantastical world, ablaze with a myriad of beautiful colors, an abundance of whimsical characters, and a hero that is so light on his feet and intuitive that he is a joy to control.

The atmosphere of Rayman 2 is aesthetically similar to the original on the surface, but as the adventure unfolds, the new theme, in which Rayman defends his kingdom from a band of villainous pirates, merges with the dreamy surroundings masterfully. Imagine a huge pirate ship beached in a surreal cove, or a dank, dimly lit catacomb infested with fat-bellied picaroons and the damp milieu that houses them. Rising out of such a gloomy keep into Rayman's surreal world is like wrapping yourself in a warm blanket, coming out of the cold. All the splendor of 2D lore, opened up and poured into vast 3D landscapes that look like *Pirates of the Caribbean* meets *The Hobbit* makes for an experience that is as rich in atmosphere as it is magnificent gameplay.

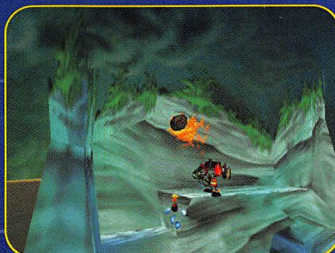
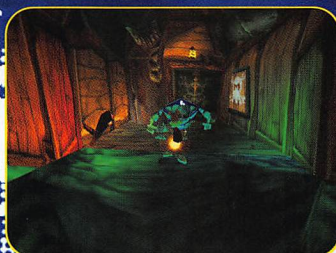




Speaking of gameplay, Rayman's learned a few new tricks since we last saw him. He can now swim, water-ski, and ride a wild rocket rodeo-style – after, of course, he catches it. Along with the ability to grapple, hover, shoot particle orbs, double-jump and shimmy, Rayman's ready for the immersing gameplay experience ahead of him. More than just a running and jumping affair (much more), *Rayman 2* is laced with a diverse array of challenges and skillful timing maneuvers, as well as unexpected gameplay twists. The designers have conceived quite an assortment of new concepts along the way, and are sapping the new Ram Pak in every way imaginable. For starters, *Rayman 2* for the Nintendo 64 has an unprecedented soundtrack, including voices, ambient sounds, and great music. Also via the Expansion Pak, *Rayman 2* features an array of real-time cinematic sequences, tying the action together without slowing it down. Sound like everything you're looking for in a 3D adventure? Trust me, it is and then some. Having played a version merely 50 percent complete for this story, I can attest to the game's stunning visuals, enemy AI, riddles, diversity and feather-like controls that respond beautifully. A formidable sequel to one of the best 2D games ever is at hand. §



Showing the diverse nature of the levels (from the left): pirates catacombs, a beached shipwreck, ice caps, and a personal storm on a high outer peak....



Q&A with Rayman 2 Creative Director Michel Ancel

GR: Does your team comprise members of the original development team?

MA: Yes. All of them!

GR: When did Rayman 2's development begin?

MA: September 1997.

GR: Tell us about the game's new immersing storyline.

MA: The story plays a stronger role than it did in the original. It sends the player deep inside the action in a more intense way, an aspect we will be developing even further in the future.

GR: What sort of new surprises does Rayman 2 have in store?

MA: Well, if I tell you that, they won't be a surprise anymore! I will say that through the use of many means of transportation, we are creating game phases never before seen, and that Rayman himself will seem somewhat overwhelmed.

GR: From where did you draw your inspiration for the look and design of the game?

MA: Fantastic Universe, and cartoons.

GR: Did you also consider feedback from players of the original?

MA: Yes. Many found the

game too difficult, and so Rayman 2 will be more well-balanced but also contain hidden challenges for the expert. There are things you don't have to do to complete the level, but it will pay off if you do; the game has great depth.

GR: Which part of Rayman 2 has proven the most difficult to realize so far?

MA: Optimization. It allows us to be at the top technologically, but we've had to pay for it by means of hard work and tricks.

GR: What are the main differences between platforms?

MA: We are making the most out of what each has to offer.

GR: Are you working on all three versions at the same time?

MA: Yes.

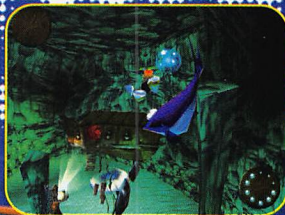
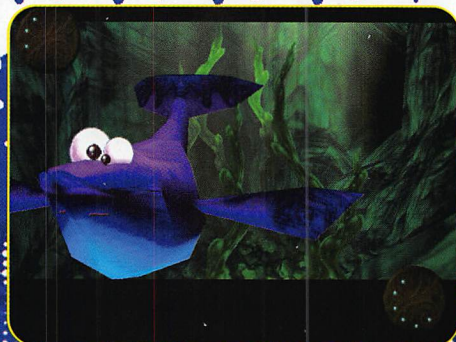
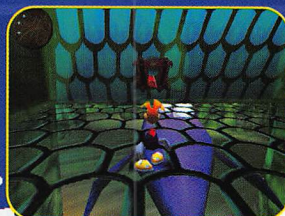
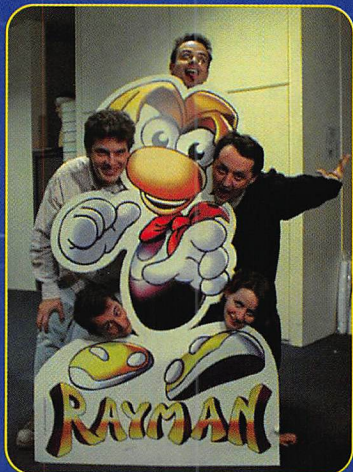
GR: Just out of curiosity, how did you come up with the name Rayman?

MA: It comes from the story of Rayman's birth, which will soon be revealed!

GR: And there you have it! Thanks to the R2 team and everyone at Ubi-Soft for another memorable game.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: NATHALIE PACCARD: PROJECT MANAGER; MICHEL ANCEL: DIRECTOR; SERGE HASCOET: GAMEPLAY MANAGER; AND FREDERIC HOUDE: GAME INTEGRATION DIRECTOR



An underwater riddle... An excellent example of Rayman 2's depth (literally). Once you figure out how to release him, you must use his breath to survive the swim to freedom!

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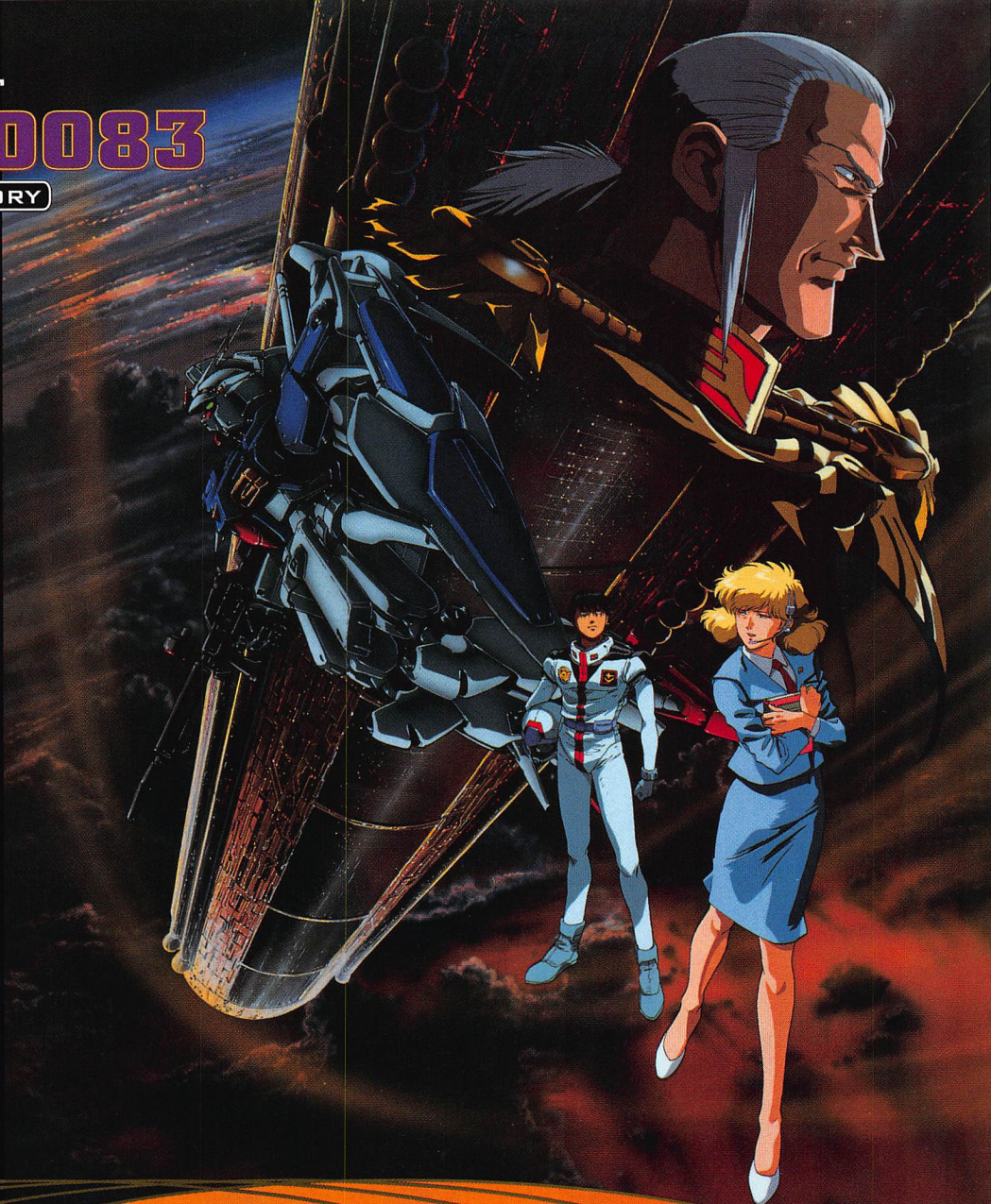
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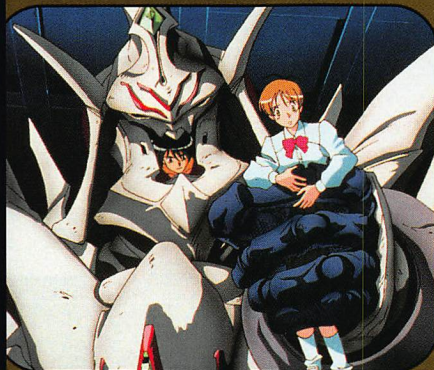
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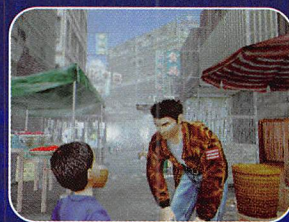




shenmue

BY WARREN H

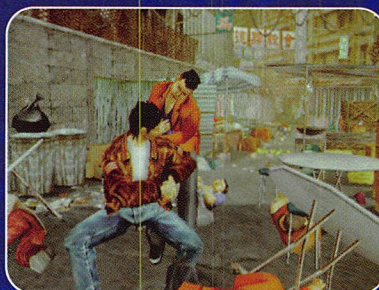
sega's arcade masters deliver
the single largest development project ever



While the play mechanics of *Shenmue* may draw comparisons to numerous other RPGs, it is the scale of Yu Suzuki's project that differentiates it. Games up to now have always limited you to certain events that occur in certain locations at certain times. You knew that every object had a purpose and that you'd need to enter every room to speak to every person and that everything they said was a vital clue to the plot.

Shenmue is different; *Shenmue* is FREE (Full Reactive Eyes Entertainment). Sega have created a world so big that it would be almost impossible to go everywhere, do everything and speak to everyone. With over 500 characters, thousands of rooms and a real-time environment, you're not so much playing a game as experiencing a virtual reality. With this freedom of choice, everyone who plays the game will have a completely different experience. No two games will ever be the same.

In order to fully appreciate this unique game system, it's first necessary to understand the game's environment. This month we take a look at the characters, locations, time and weather that form the basis of the *Shenmue* world. Next month, we'll follow up with an in-depth look at the various play modes, battle system and in-game events.



(Top) Ryo stops to consider the words of a small child, one of over a thousand realistic characters. (Left) Others will be dealt with through hand-to-hand confrontation.



Ryo's mother died when he was very young, and since then he's spent all his time studying under the watch of his strict father. He's a little reckless and is always ready to pick a quarrel or start a fight, but this hides the strong sense of motivation he has inside him. In pursuit of the answers

about the mysterious death of his father, Ryo starts his journey to China, a country he's never been to before. Who knows what's waiting for him there? Ryo is the hero of *Shenmue* and the character you control in the game.

RYO HAZUKI

Embosomed by mother nature for all her life, the innocent Rei has grown up not knowing what it is to distrust another person. Behind that expression of naïveté is a young woman full of courage and inner strength that has been raised by the great land of China. The curious Rei is simple and pure but also deeply gentle and tender. When she meets Ryo for the first time, her destiny will undoubtedly be changed forever.

Rei is the game's heroine and the central character to the game.



REI SHENHUA



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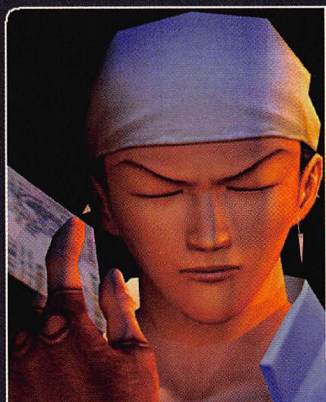
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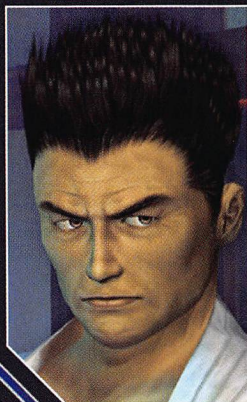
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**REN WUYING**

Ren is the head of a street gang based in Aberdeen, Hong Kong. In this city, where he's always been back-to-back with danger, he's had to learn how to look after himself. He believes that the way of the world is to trust only money and he thinks that all honest people are fools. He was raised as a Mongolian nomad but his childhood is still enshrouded in many mysteries.

**IWAO HAZUKI**

Iwao is Ryo's father and master of the Hazuki style of Jujitsu. In his youth he traveled to China to train as a martial artist, and while there he meets many people. His strong determination to master the martial arts has earned him the deep respect of many people, regardless of the school of martial arts they study. Since Iwao dies very early in the game, this character's exact role is a mystery.

**CHOUHZUN**

Chouhzun wears a bright red, voluptuously sensual dress and with her gestures tempts men astray. With her fearful eyes she can see through anything at all times, right into a person's heart, and these eyes are always in search of the next prey. This violent passion is a flame that will consume everything. Chouhzun's daring but cruel behavior is totally unfathomable.



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SOULIU

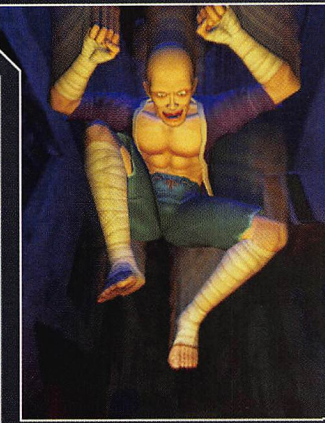
Souliu is a master of a phantom style of Kempo that is no longer practiced by others. His cool-headed look alone is enough to overpower his opponents, and the frightening power of his fighting techniques will tear away an enemy's fighting spirit. His fists, steeped in vice, will show no mercy and consign to oblivion all those who stand in his way.

CHAI

Chai lurks in the shadows with eyes like a beast, and his ugly form intimidates all who see it. With his lightning-fast movement he can make sport of his opponents and with his long arms he can perform various thrust attacks to accurately hit his enemy's vulnerable spots. Chai is cunning, brutal and tenacious. Anything he goes after never escapes!



Koh loves the traditional culture of China and is well known as a dedicated scholar of the history and martial arts related to it. She studies in her room, which is full of books and scrolls, and has gathered only the highest respect from all around her. Koh is very beautiful and a popular person, but what will Ryo be able to discover from inside her limpid eyes?

KOH XIUYEI



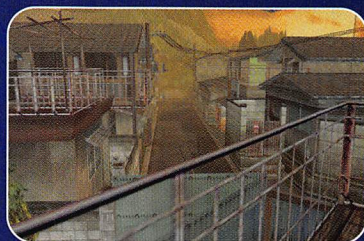
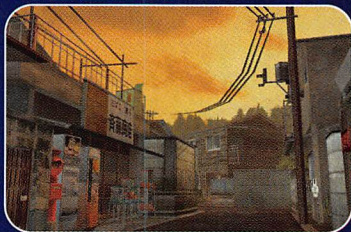
locations

massive 3d representation through vast polygonal construction staged in asian countries, winter 1986: research yielding environmental perfection.

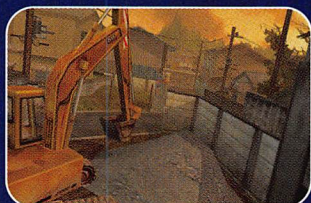
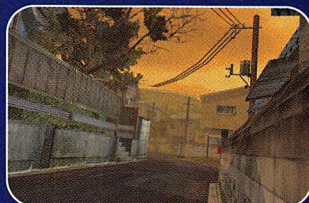
depth and stature measured and realized beyond the norm through advanced technological design: devotion yielding unparalleled realism.

japan

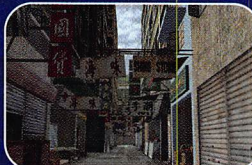
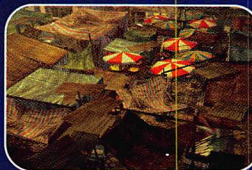
Shenmue's first location is Yokosuka, a small seaside town on the Miura Peninsular in Kanagawa Prefecture, just a short train journey south of Tokyo. Everything from the old-style red post box to the typical street-side vending machines accurately portray the nostalgic atmosphere of the traditional Japanese town. This is the area that Ryo Hazuki was raised in and where he used to live with his father in a large, old house. When the game begins, the year is 1986 and it's wintertime in Japan. From here, Ryo presumably takes a boat (shown on the opposite page) from the nearby harbor and heads for Hong Kong.



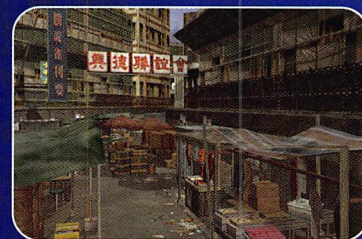
old house. When the game begins, the year is 1986 and it's wintertime in Japan. From here, Ryo presumably takes a boat (shown on the opposite page) from the nearby harbor and heads for Hong Kong.



In contrast to Ryo's quiet home town is the vibrant city of Hong Kong, with its high-rise buildings and bustling streets. You can almost feel the suffocating pressure of the city where most dark alleys never see the sunlight. The principal locations now are the harbor areas of Aberdeen on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Walled City on the main land, which you must travel to by bus. All the detail and realism of a living city has been captured perfectly by Sega, who visited China many times to take photographs and videos of all the principal places.



hong kong



rooms

franked by lavish detail

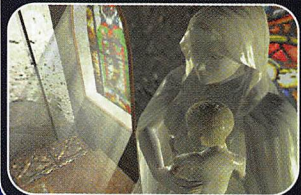
unprecedented atmosphere

Sega's insatiable desire for realism has driven them to create a world so large that its scale is almost beyond comprehension. Kowloon Walled City alone has over 1,200 rooms that can be entered, not to mention an entire city to explore in order to find them. Each of the rooms is com-

pletely original with many unique features to distinguish it from other similar places. In addition, each room contains a variety of objects that can be examined, used or taken. It isn't necessary to visit every room, as hints during the game guide you to the most important locations.

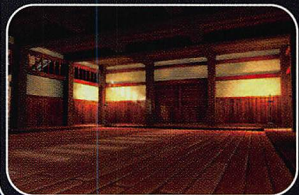
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Chapel: Due to the strong British influence before China regained control, Hong Kong contains many churches.



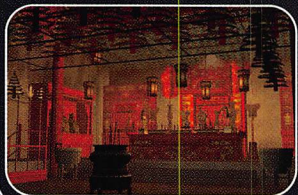
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Martial Arts Gym: This is where Iwao Hazuki practiced his Jujitsu and trained his son, Ryo, in the martial arts.



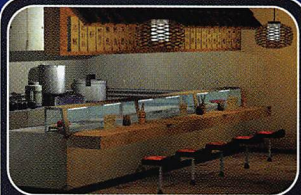
3

Buddhist Temple: A typical sight across most of China and a place Ryo might visit to pray for good luck.



4

Tattoo Shop: This location could provide a mini game where you can choose your own tattoo.



Sushi Shop: One of the more expensive places where your character can eat, if you have enough money.



Travel Agents: From here you'll be able to buy boat, plane and bus tickets to travel from place to place.



Pharmacy: This shop, specializing in Chinese medicine, sells various roots, herbs and strange parts of animals.



Restaurant: A standard-class place offering delicious Chinese cooking and a variety of alcohol at a good price.



realistic time control

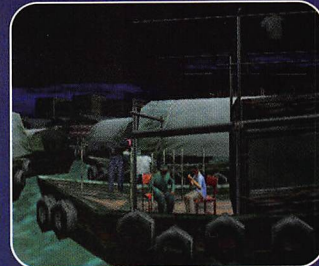
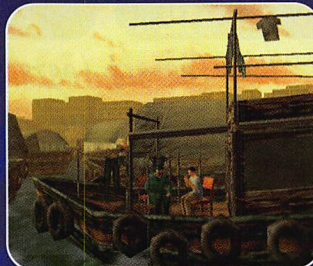
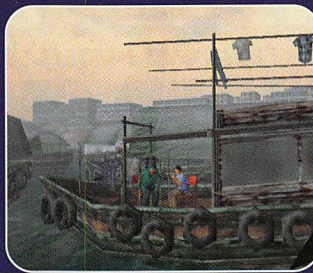
the passing of time isn't merely aesthetic in this 3D world

In creating a real-life world for you to interact within, Sega have gone one step beyond the typical 3D. If you can imagine that all games up to now have consisted of X, Y and Z, then *Shenmue* adds T for time, a new fourth dimension. Not only is where you go important, but when you go is now equally essential. At one level, it means that visually the game will alter in real time according to the time of day, so the sky will become dark at night and the sun will rise in the morning. However, how this affects the game is more important.



Let's take an example where your boat ticket to Shanghai was stolen when you got beaten up in a bar-room brawl. In order to earn enough money to buy a new ticket, you might have to work for three weeks in various part-time jobs. By the time you eventually get to Shanghai, an important person that you had planned to meet may have gone on vacation with his family, or a valuable item you had sought after has already been sold to another person, thus hampering your progress even further.

In other games, losing a fight simply means reduced Hit Points, but in *Shenmue*, being beat up has real consequences, such as maybe a broken leg or sprained ankle. You might need to spend some time in the hospital, and even after that be unable to do heavy work for a few months. Time can be important!



(Top) Here we see four unique time changes in the harbor. Not only will the horizon and tide differ according to time, but the type of interactivity and the behavior of its people will be greatly effected. (Left) This magnificent scene, demonstrating a massive ocean liner's passing, is shown during three different time periods. The repercussions will always vary.

magical weather

an ever-changing component of this amazing

Working in conjunction with the game's flow of time is *Shenmue*'s real-time weather system.

Sega have researched the weather for all the game locations over the several years that the game encompasses from 1986. On a certain day at a certain time in a certain place they know if the weather will be sunny, rainy, cloudy, foggy or snowy. The appearance of weather changes naturally with clouds rolling in before it rains, and the sound effects are excellent as well, greatly adding to the atmosphere. But there's more to *Shenmue* than real-time weather effects, because the weather does directly affect the game environment.

For example, as the snow falls it begins to settle, so the roads turn white and the accumulating snow becomes thicker. When the rain falls in spring, the delicate cherry blossom on the trees is knocked off. During a clear sunny day, the view from a high-rise building will stretch far into the distance.

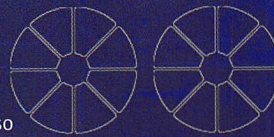
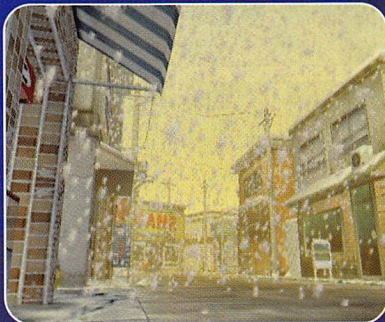


DIAGRAM A
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These changes in weather also affect the game itself. On a stormy night, with high winds and pouring rain, you won't find anyone prepared to go out in a boat. However, when the snow is falling you may be able to easily track someone by following their footprints.

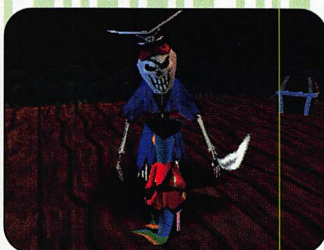
(Top) As Yu Suzuki demonstrated at the show, *Shenmue*'s incredible weather system goes well beyond pretty effects, into the realm of real-life immersion. (Bottom) Witness the clouds massing in the sky and the snowfall increasing until the ground is covered.



GEX 3

DEEP COVER GECKO

BY DAVE HALVERSON



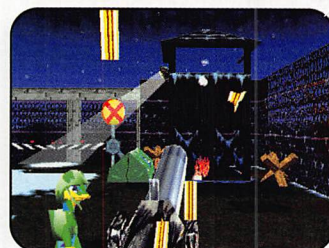
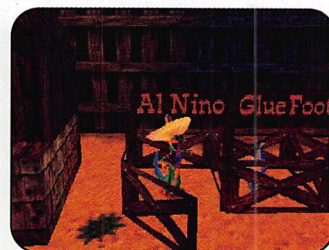
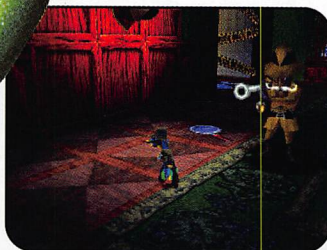
*Here Leezard, Leezard, Leezard...
Crystal D is crafting another scaly masterpiece...*

Gex: *Enter the Gecko*, having been Crystal Dynamic's first foray into the creation of a 3D universe in which to house their illustrious Gecko, was likely a highly experimental endeavor. Switching gears from 2D to 3D is always precarious: The best case scenario is *Mario 64*; on the flip side of the coin lie train wrecks the likes of *Bubsy* and *Pitfall 3D*. But when the dust settled, and Dana Gould barked out his last cliché, Crystal had a bona-fide PlayStation hit on their hands. Now, just over a year later, we're staring down the barrel of the second incarnation of Gex in 3D along with (OK, I called this one) his own line of action figures (boy, is that head going to swell) from none other than ReSaurus, the masters of plastic. Having always been a confidante of the scaly one, no one is happier about all of this than I, and so it is with much anticipation I approach *Gex 3: Deep Cover Gecko*.

This time around, Gex's ultimate goal is to rescue the beautiful Agent Xtra, played by *Baywatch* babe Marilee Andrada (that explains the Xtra), who's been kidnapped by the highly durable digital nemesis, Rez. *Gex 3* will include FMV for the first time, in order to take advantage of her, shall we say, gifts. Gameplay, for the most part, is reminiscent of last year's model (a good thing), only with mucho added diversity, even more wit (Santa's evil twin... Satan!) and, most important, a more intuitive camera. Gex will also pilot an array of vehicles and dawn a few new suits: tanks, scuba gear, snowboard, glider, burro, croc, and even a camel are all part of the new equation.

Although our early preview CD was still rough around the edges, it's obvious that the team, having familiarized itself with the engine and mechanics, has been able to place the emphasis on perfecting what it already knows works, and so *Deep Cover Gecko* will assuredly be markedly better than *Enter the Gecko* — i.e., this game's gonna kick some tail. Everything you loved about *Enter the Gecko* is in tow, and is even vastly improved, from the visuals to the play mechanics themselves.

The Nintendo 64 version, which will feature exclusive levels (levels, not level!), is again being developed out-of-house, but by a more formidable team, and so we may all soon bask in the glory of an all new Gecko. We'll uncover more of Gex's latest caper in the April issue. ⚡



Gex 3
Deep Cover Gecko

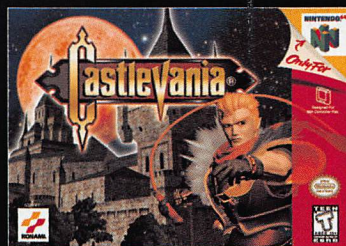
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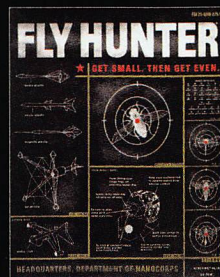
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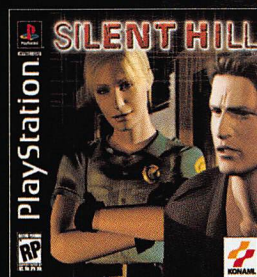
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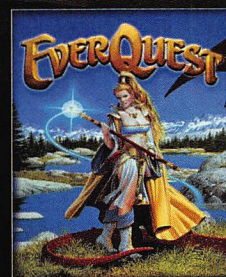
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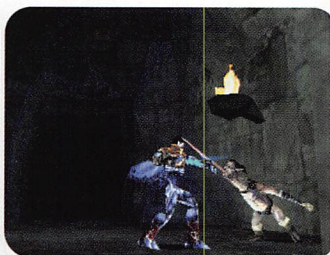
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There are times when I become so bound to a game's world that I completely forgive it of its faults. In *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*, one of the more engrossing experiences I've had with a PlayStation game, the inspiring artwork, exquisitely dark atmosphere and superb story rendered me impervious to the lower points of the game: mechanical action, lengthy load times, pervasive slowdown. But despite its stumblings, the original *Legacy of Kain* showed me things no game had ever attempted before, and with its sequel, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, growing closer to completion, the indelible essence of *Blood Omen* is gradually being re-established – minus the nuisances.

Shedding priceless 2D artwork for a three-dimensional world, *Soul Reaver* is continuing to surprise me with its ability to maintain the integrity of the original game's ambience. The texture work is taking 3D on the PlayStation to unseen heights, staunchly preserving the same visionary details afforded by 2D design. This time around, the developers had the sense to dig deeper and support their brooding world with a more dynamic character, granting Raziel various sets of complex puzzles to complete, many of which revolve around manip-

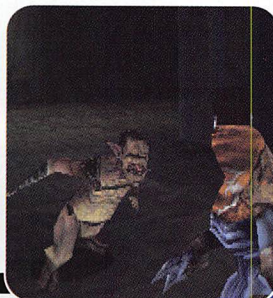
ulating blocks scattered throughout the levels. But even when focus is shifted to exploration and combat, the player must still carefully consider each scenario; the added element of two planes of existence – the spectral and material – becomes a key influence on how the game must be played out. And, like in any good game where action is heavy, some times wanton violence plays its entertaining role – burn a victim to ashes or impale it with a blunt object.

In a game where darkness and death are the star, the music and voice dialogue are playing large parts in enhancing the experience. Only gloom exists in *Soul Reaver*, and the haunting sounds – an eerily trembling female voice punctuates one of the more memorable tracks – and heavy story are burying the game even deeper in shadow. Whatever words *Soul Reaver* manages to inspire upon its completion, charming will not be one of them. ❄



LEGACY OF KAIN SOUL REAVER

BY BRADY FIECHTER

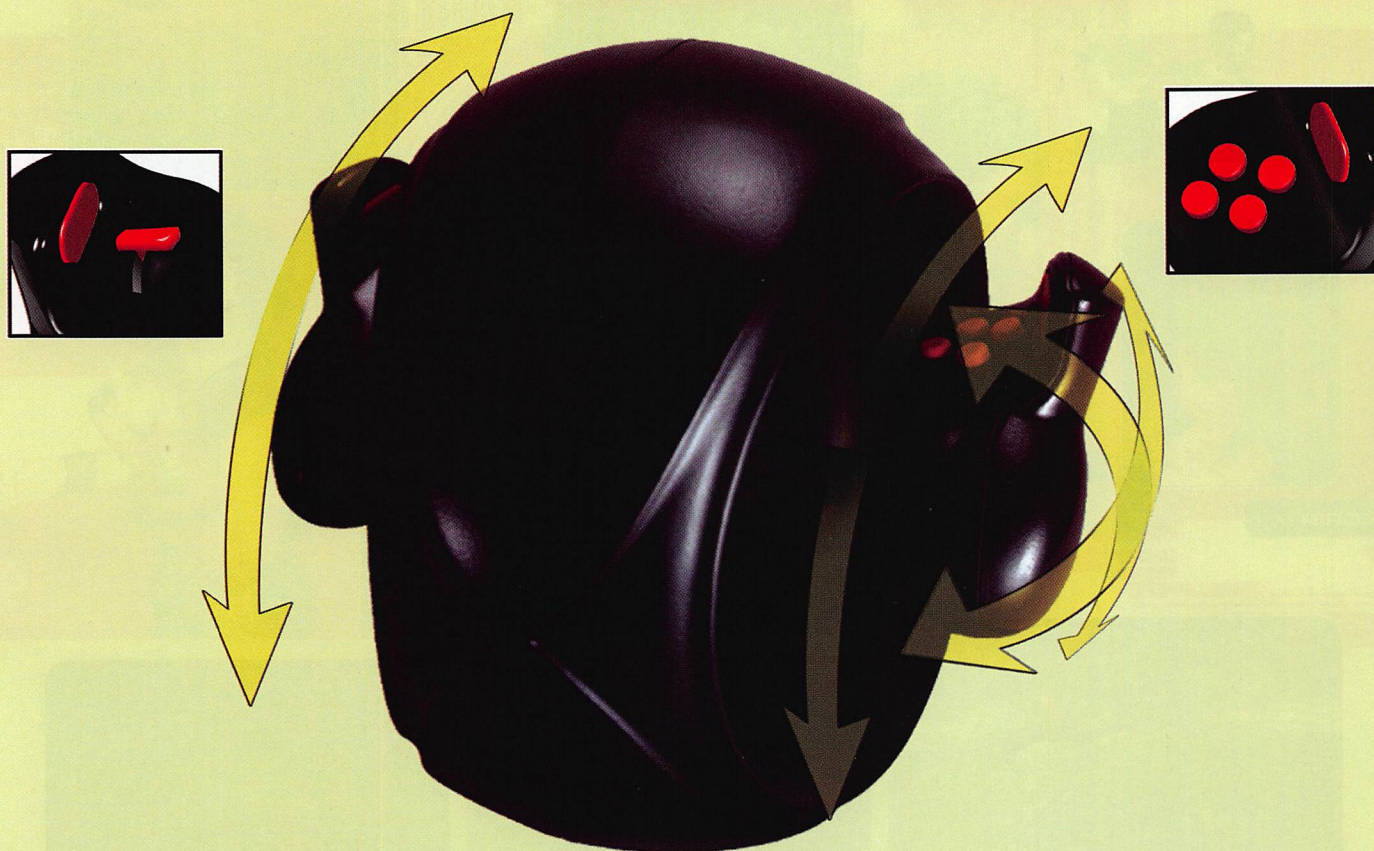


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A really good RPG must, of course, have a really good story, but a strong battle system is no less important. The battle system in *Legaia* is a great one – inventive, involving, full of energy.

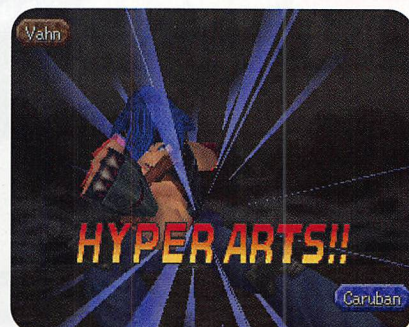
While familiar in setup and turn-based strategy, the battles draw their uniqueness from revolving around hand-to-hand combat moves that are deployed through specific combinations of the D-pad. When a Super Arts or Miracle Arts combo is performed, the character will unleash devastating blows to the enemy in a sequence of flashy acrobatics and magical power. Learned from other characters and discovered through experimentation, these techniques become enormously powerful and increasingly entertaining as the game progresses. While this 3D-fighting-like combat becomes the primary source for enemy disposal, magic attacks can also be called upon once they have been absorbed from a fallen foe, enabling more traditional elements such as healing and long-range offensive attacks.

LEGEND OF LEGAIA

BY BRADY FIECHTER



>> LEGAIA <<

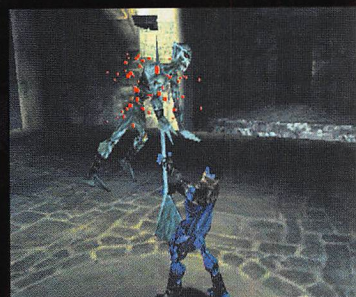
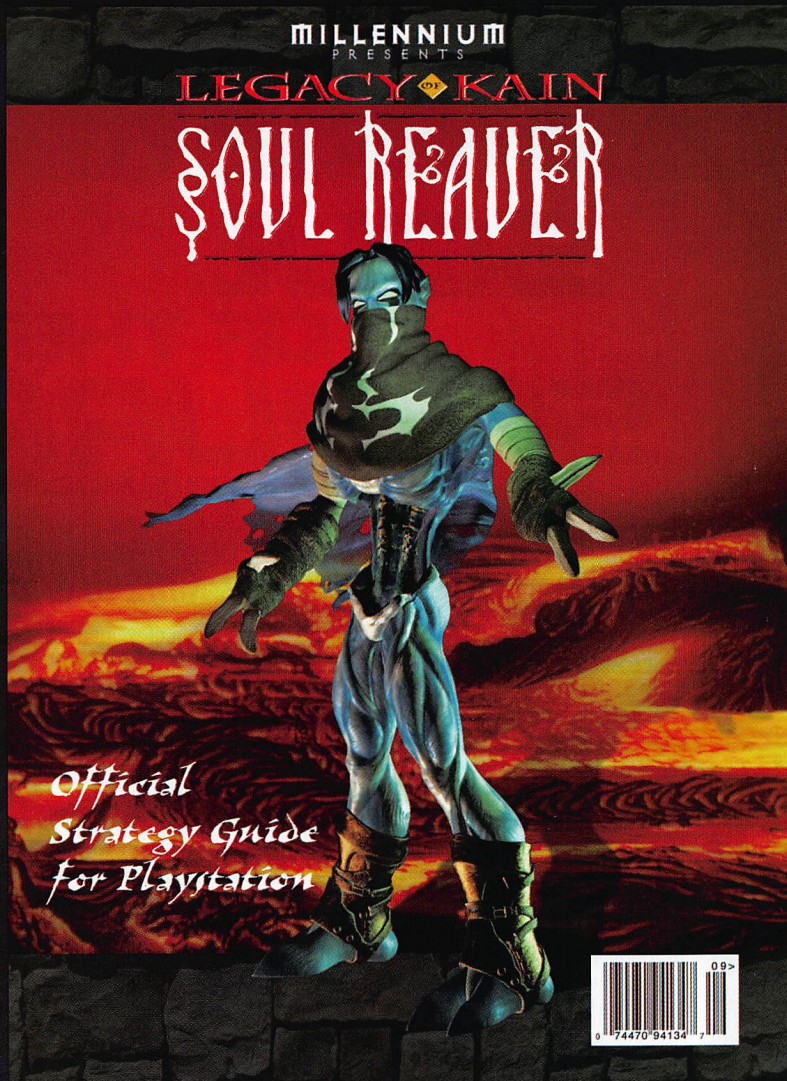


An array of mystical skills is channeled through Seru – artifacts created by a god to imbue humans with uncommon strengths. It is around these mysterious objects that the story of *Legaia* is told, taking three young adventurers to the far reaches of their world in search of Genesis trees – sources of purity that are the only hope of cleansing a deadly mist that is reaching into all corners of the land, horribly altering the Seru and those who link with them.

In this massive world a familiar RPG stage is set, with dungeons, towns and stretches of fields harboring many moments of battle, explo-

ration and character interaction. Although the characters trudge over the world map, travelling through towns and dungeons is made pleasantly quick, thanks to an automatic run button, and everything from the simple interface to the various combat commands offers a pleasing and familiar design. In fact, nearly every facet of *Legaia* is given a solid touch, from the respectable enemy and character designs to the convincing settings to the excellent music and sound effects. Now it's up to the final story to ensure our enthusiastic involvement through this promising adventure. ✨

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SOUL OF THE SAMURAI

BY MIKE HOBBS

*Abandoning the Western influences of MGS...
Slice and dice with Konami's latest*

Though very few Americans grew up watching the Japanese equivalent of the western the *Chanbara*, that shouldn't stop gamers from enjoying the traditional hack-and-slash action of Konami's latest, *Soul of the Samurai*. Featuring pre-rendered backgrounds and motion-captured characters, this action title set in medieval Japan is a change from the more Western-influenced *Metal Gear Solid* and *Silent Hill*.

You get a choice of two characters in *SotS*. The sword-wielding male, Kotarou Hiba, is returning to his hometown to visit his parent's grave. Disillusioned after his father's death during a rebellion against the evil Shogunate, he gave up being a sword instructor. The female lead, Rin, was raised along with her brother Shinjiro by a leader of Shogunate's team of ninjas. One day, a ship carrying gold and weapons was lost and Shinjiro was sent to investigate. He went missing, and Rin, against orders, returned to search for her lost brother against the wishes of her leader.

This brings both characters together, and after a brief introductory section, each sets off on his or her own adventure. Kotarou, though

sluggish in movement, is a master of sword-play, while Rin is a quick combo master, pulling off kicks and quick swipes with her small blade. Each has a realistic set of motions, thanks in no small part to the motion capturing efforts of the Japan Action Club, a well-known organization specializing in movie and TV fight scenes and recruited here by Konami to lend their considerable skill to *Soul of the Samurai*.

Currently 75 percent complete and still completely in Japanese, we'll be bringing you a more detailed look at *Soul of the Samurai* in an upcoming issue. For now, it's clear that this unique action game will offer up loads of traditional Japanese atmosphere and good old-fashioned blood-letting. ㊦



Soul of the Samurai



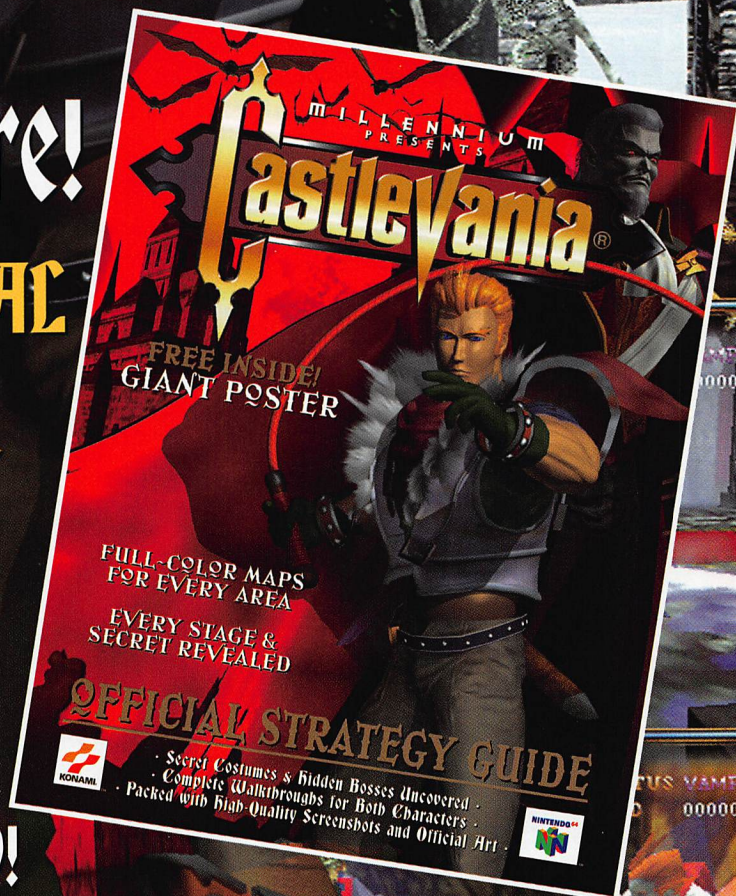
Undead Beware!

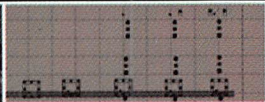
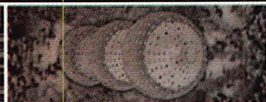
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ALPHA CENTAURI

DEVELOPER: FIRAXIS GAMES PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS AVAILABLE: SPRING

Keeping his reputation veritably intact, Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri* presents an incredibly deep experience of planetary colonization that will test the limits of your strategic and diplomatic prowess. Interacting with a wide array of political personalities (there are seven unique divisions), making and breaking treaties, earning money, harvesting resources, landscaping and engineering war machines that are highly tailored to fit your tactics make this a game strictly for devout strategy gamers. Much like the *Civilization* series, considered to be Mr. Meier's most notable achievement, the game is somewhat old school in a gaming age dominated by real-time strategy games. But meticulous turn-based gameplay is exactly what the audience in question will

expect, and want.

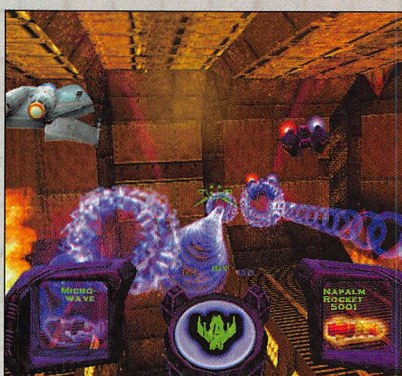
With an expansive list of technologies, base modifications, numerous extras, and an absolutely huge, mysterious planet to explore, terraform and populate, the scope of this game is going to be massive, the possibilities endless. Apparently, the final game will have five unique endings that depend on the actions and decisions that players make throughout the campaign. Fans of the *Civilization* series will feel right at home and likely find themselves hopelessly absorbed by *Alpha Centauri*. Anyone looking for a teaser can download a demo and check out a wealth of information, including the intriguing story that precedes the game, at:

<http://www.alphacentauri.com>



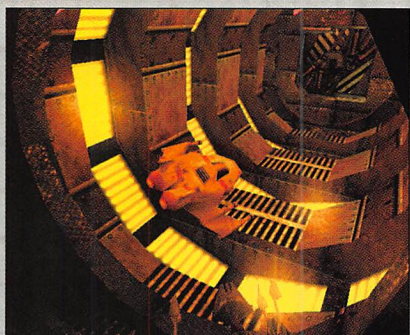
DESCENT 3

DEVELOPER: OUTRAGE ENTERTAINMENT PUBLISHER: INTERPLAY AVAILABLE: MARCH



It's strange we had to wait this long for another *Descent*. This classic Interplay series, for those who don't know, shook up the world of first-person shooters back in 1995 by not only offering much more control than the current shooting phenomenon did, but also revolutionized multiplayer gaming by being the first title to allow people to join in the middle of a deathmatch. And while *Doom* still walked away with the FPS trophy for that generation, *Descent* still snagged enough fans to make it one of the most-played internet games until *Quake* came along. Yet, instead of evolving the series such as it did with *Doom*, Interplay confusingly stopped creating "normal" *Descents* after the good-yet-not-that-revolutionary sequel, *Descent 2*. Why? Perhaps the atrocious "dungeon RPG" *Descent to Undermountain* had something to do with it, but

let's just forget about that, shall we? Anyway, *Descent* is back. After being nearly out-done at their own game by Iguana's *Forsaken*, Outrage Entertainment (a spinoff of Parallax Software, the folks responsible for the *Descent* name) developed a title that not only has the insane vertiginous feel and tight control of the original, but has graphics that are as sharp as anything currently out there. The levels are huge, filled with dizzying twists and turns, complex multi-stage puzzles, and offer a bit of fresh air with new outdoor areas. And thankfully, as with the *Descents* of old, multi-play is king with this latest version. To keep with this tradition, Outrage are working incredibly hard to make sure that internet brawls are not only easy to get into, but out-perform the current crop of "deathmatch-friendly" shooters.



DIRT
DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: FUNCOM M AVAILABLE: SPRING

As we approach the tail end of Sony's tenure with their amazing 32-bit hardware, there remains no definitive motocross game in an otherwise overly well-rounded arsenal. Playmate's bare bones *VMX* came close, and Acclaim's *Jeremy McGrath '98* sold well, but there's still room you could parallel park a semi in for improvement. Enter Funcom. Currently putting the final touches on their entry into the field, *DIRT*, they plan to fill the gap, and without even playing the final version, I can already assure motocross and racing fans in general that Funcom will succeed. Beginning with the robust engine, *DIRT* features wide tracks populated generously on both sides with lush scenery, with an engine developed solely for motocross. Unlike past efforts to convert car-racing engines for a two-wheeled project, this engine is designed specifically for motorcycles. Even when a crowd of bikes is on screen, not a trace of framus interruptus occurs, and the rider animation and handling physics are right on the money. *DIRT* will also feature a two-player head-to-head contest along with a full host of options, including a full Championship Season, Quick Races, Practice, and Time Attack modes. The only thing missing (not!) is a license, the absence of which allowed Funcom more cash for the game, which they will publish themselves. Keep your eyes peeled for this one. ⚡

RAMPAGE 2
DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: MIDWAY AVAILABLE: SPRING

One of the 80's most durable coin-op ports has once again been re-born, and this time to even greater effect. All new for '99, *Rampage 2* features more than enough enhancements to make it a worthwhile purchase in addition to last year's *World Tour*. You'll find out lots more on why in next month's review (the game came in just as we went to press), but as you can see, an all new assortment of beautifully rendered beasts (and enemy swarms) are yours for the feasting. There's also greater detail, more parallax in the backgrounds and much greater player control. The Movin'-On Screen rocks, too. More next month. ⚡

SEVEN KINGDOMS II
DEVELOPER: ENLIGHT SOFT. PUBLISHER: INTERACTIVE MAGIC AVAILABLE: WINTER

While its release was overshadowed by *Age of Empires*, I-Magic's *Seven Kingdoms* entered the competitive RTS market with a whimper, but quickly gathered critical acclaim from both the gaming media and fans alike, thanks to its unique (and very addicting) gameplay. And while the original title never received the sales it deserved, I-Magic expects a bit more from the aptly-named sequel – something that *Seven Kingdoms II* should be able to harness without question. Trevor Chan and his team are following the "successful sequel" manual to the letter, namely creating a game that offers everything that made the first *SK* such a success, and meanwhile adding in an incredible amount of new goodies. That perfect blend of genres is back, giving players that "Warcraft meets Civilization" feeling once again, but now new role-playing elements (such as more involving Heroes), the expanded role of the Frytans, a playable race and the game's main antagonist, an improved Random Campaign Generator which will give *SKII* unlimited (and more compelling) replay value, and the addition of four more playable civilizations are just some of the new features that should make the die-hard fans of this series and newcomers alike very excited. Oh yeah, and the game's new graphics are pretty nice to boot. ⚡

WARZONE 2100
DEVELOPER: PUMPKIN STUDIOS PUBLISHER: EIDOS AVAILABLE: SPRING

Aside from the *Command and Conquer* series and a short list of hybrid titles, real-time strategy has had a tough time finding its way onto the PlayStation. This deep and wide gap perhaps inspired Eidos to port *Warzone 2100* to Sony's 32-bit champion. Surprisingly close to its PC counterpart in its feature set, the game is deeper than most RTS games, as it allows players to not only manage resources and deploy units strategically, but also to research specific weapon, propulsion and defensive technologies. These advancements are then available to manufacture and customize vehicles, a feature that widely opens the door of creativity. The question is, can a 3D environment really work in this type of game on the PlayStation? The early version of *Warzone* that we played showed a level of complexity in gameplay that is unmatched among RTS titles, but the engine was quite rough and the camera often hampered the flow of the action. Very early, potentially good, and in need of some tweaks. ⚡





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Sega's Dreamcast is off to a running start, mascot in tow!

Of all the significant moments in the evolution of my gaming career, one of the most pivotal was seeing *Sonic the Hedgehog* for the first time at the 1990 CES. Not only was it a giant leap in terms of gameplay and level design, but never had I fallen so instantly in love with a video game character. Sonic was fast, loaded with attitude, and the excitement surrounding him between that fateful day and the game's release spun as madly as the little blue guy himself. I remember the almost unbearable anticipation like it was yesterday. It was then and there that I pledged my allegiance to the Gene-

sis and became an even bigger Sega fanatic than I already was, having graduated from NES to Genesis. It was an exciting time, the transition between 8- and 16-bit, a time when you got butterflies in your stomach every time you saw a new screenshot or as each 8-bit classic received its inevitable 16-bit facelift. *Golden Axe*, *Phantasy Star*, *Shinobi* – they just kept coming. And then there were the arcade ports like *Altered Beast*, *Strider* and *Midnight Resistance*, games you never dreamt you'd play at home. When the time came to check out of 16-bit and usher in 3D gaming, I for one wasn't quite ready to go. The SNES was on fire with games like *Mario RPG* and *Donkey Kong*, and developers were doing insane things with the Genesis. So it wasn't so exciting ushering in 32- and 64-bit gaming because, in doing so, I was forced to abandon games as I knew them. It wasn't until the likes of *Super Mario 64* and *Crash Bandicoot* hit that I began to not only accept but adore 3D gaming as I do now. That said, *Astral* and *Clockwork Knight 2* still make me believe the Saturn could have made it big as a 2D powerhouse and continued the bloodline, but that is another story. My point is that going from 32- and 64-bit consoles to 128-bit feels more like going from 8-bit to 16-bit did. We're going to see all of our favorite 3D games get major facelifts and play arcade games like *VF3* and *PowerStone* at home on a \$200 console! *Deja-vu* revisited! This new beginning is now officially underway for me, having been utterly dazzled by the same little blue



SONIC ADVENTURE

BY DAVE HALVERSON



*"I'll never look back
I've got no regrets,
Cause time doesn't wait for me.
I CHOOSE TO GO MY OWN WAY!"*
-SONIC

guy that got me the first time: Sonic the hedgehog. If this game doesn't quicken your pulse and bring a smile to your face, then, well, you're a corpse.

The first thing you'll notice as you watch *Sonic Adventure's* remarkable CG overture is the clarity and fluidity of everything: 128-bit gaming is going to incorporate unprecedented movies and segues along with its mind-blowing gameplay. Entering the gamefield itself as the adventure begins, we find Sonic looking down on a police barricade as he attempts to corral the destructive Chaos-o — the aqueous adversary whom Eggman (Dr. Robotnik) has teamed up with to, what else... take over the world. Sonic scoots in among the building tops and you soon find yourself controlling him for the first time against this beautifully transparent opponent. At one point during the brief battle, Chaos-o will hover far overhead, showing off some impressive camera work, but he's easy to extinguish using three of Sonic's jumping attacks. Sonic now attacks via pressing the button once he's airborne. Pressing it again before he touches the ground, you can link attacks, bounding from enemy to enemy.

After making quick work of the pint-sized Chaos-o, we next find Sonic in a familiar pose, kickin' it poolside surrounded by babes in bikinis. He's awakened when Tails crash lands his plane on the sun-drenched



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG



Age: Unknown
Species: Hedgehog
Origin: Unknown
Hobbies: Running
Special Abilities: Rolling Attack



I know it's hard to believe, but all these shots are of actual gameplay! Blue is now officially back!

A melding of graphic and audio bliss that you'll likely never forget. Absolutely amazing!



SuperH
arc engine



XG
lisc





springs, hidden trails, and the renowned Sonic loops – which take on epic new proportions in *Sonic Adventure*. Inherent to all the Sonics, glass pods (many of which are cleverly hidden) containing rings, shields, magnetic fields, one-ups and speed shoes are placed strategically throughout each level as well. Ultimately,



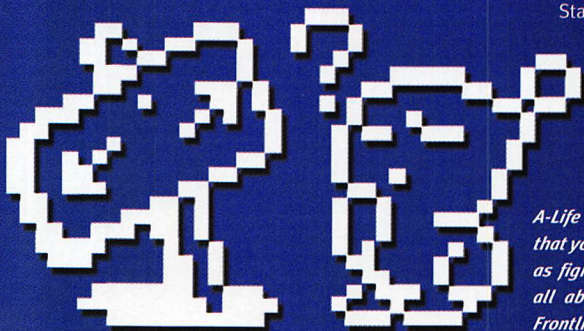
Experience extraordinary graphics and the fastest gameplay of your life

you'll need to complete each level three times to collect all the emblems and complete all tasks, so returning later, it's great fun to explore regions you once tore through. It's hard to describe the feeling you get when you first arrive at places like Windy Valley or Icecaps, or when you and Tails take to the skies for the first time. The melding of the visuals and Sonic Team's amazing music will melt most Sega fans, forming resurrected disciples with no recollection of the 32X or *Night Trap*.

Aside from the many sprawling levels are expansive open areas consisting of the Egg Carrier, Station Square, and Mystic Ruin, from which this huge game takes root. It is here where the six characters' stories unfold, each unique and intertwined. Within each – especially Mystic Ruin – lie vast spaces, such as immense ancient temples, congested city streets and huge deviant structures – all marvels to behold. The first time you step off the train (you take a monorail from Station Square to Mystic Ruin) and look out from the platform you'll be dumbfounded by the textures, and they only get better as the game progresses. Each level, of which there are 10

in Sonic's game, not only hold great surprise, but many offer it six times (one for each passing character), exhibiting an astonishing amount of depth for a near-launch title. Reaching each level can itself often pose a challenge, as, rather than making destinations

A-Life are a peculiar little breed that you can groom and then raise as fighters on your PDA... Read all about them in this month's Frontlines... I ran out of space!





obvious, Yuji-Naka has injected vast amounts of cinema into each character's game; in order to play the next area, you'll need to find the event and then unearth or perhaps even figure out how

to unlock the next level. There are also key rooms hidden within the staging areas where each character will find his or her unique hidden attributes, such as Sonic's Light Shoes, or E-102's High Output Booster. Finding these is key in all six games.

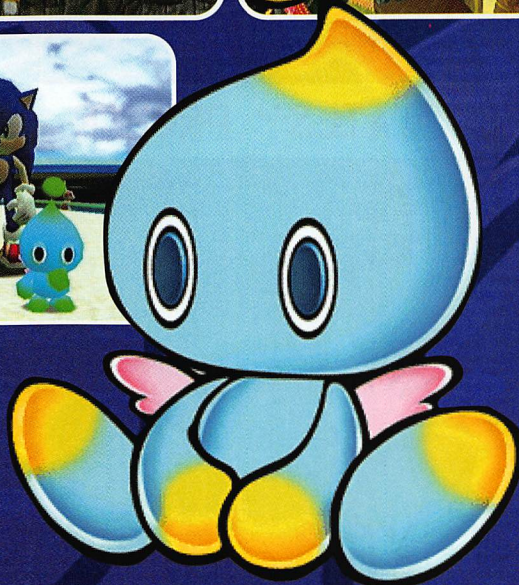
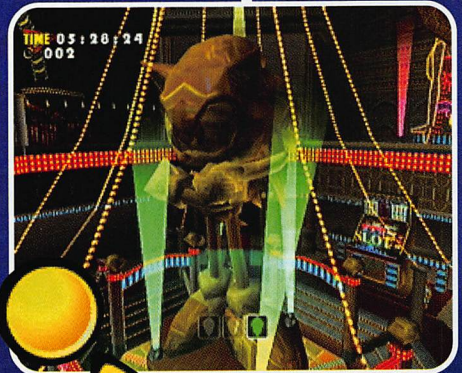
"Elevates you to a level of gaming euphoria you probably thought you'd never attain. A testament to Yuji Naka's genius."

As majestic as SA is, it does have its share of minor glitches: Characters often shudder on shallow seams and there are a few holes, should you wander into a precarious seam or odd angle. I suppose that rather than delaying this pivotal title, Sega of Japan opted to button it up as well as possible and still make Christmas, and I'm very glad they did. All the more reason to look forward to the more refined U.S. version, especially since all of the speech in the game (of which there is much) will be re-recorded in English. I just hope Sega of America pull off a suitable dub.


As you play through *Sonic Adventure*, praying it will never end, you'll notice that everything in the game has a thick, sturdy feel to it, unlike the paper-thin walls and fragmented polygons we've become accustomed to. And as for z-buffering waves and jagged pixels... fading memories. Playing *Sonic Adventure* elevates you to a level of gaming euphoria you probably thought you'd never attain. It's a true testament to Yuji Naka's genius.

In the end, *Sonic Adventure* filled a void that I've had for years. At once it soothed my hunger for a true next-generation Sonic and rekindled my faith in Sega. Regardless of what comes next from Sony or Nintendo, if Sega and their

Six characters starring in six separate games! All unique, yet intertwined...



third parties support this console, and Sega dishes out the classics, the Dreamcast is going to thrive for many years to come. Think about *Panzer*, *Shinobi*, *Phantasy Star*, and (gulp)... *Treasure*!

I've come full circle with *Sonic the Hedgehog* and Sega. Whether you have, too, or this will be your first Sonic experience, the Dreamcast and *Sonic Adventure* will certainly enrich your life when it hits the U.S. this fall. 



SuperH
32-bit engine



XG
XG-1





We first encounter Knuckles guarding the sacred master Gem. When he innocently nods off, he is awakened by a disturbing turn of events. Standing right behind him, he discovers Chaos, and it has shattered the sacred Gem! Knuckles' levels are spent homing in on their beacons and collecting them to return to the shrine. While retrieval is the main focus, Knuckles' lev-

KNUCKLES THE ECHIDNA

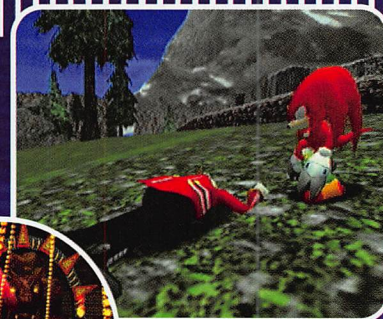
els are a blast just to explore. Knuckles' special item is the Shovel Claw, which allows him to dig. Just like in *Sonic 3*, Knuckles can also glide and climb certain vertical surfaces. Knuckles' first level is Speed Highway.



Tails' adventure begins with some unexpected engine failure, which sends his plane crashing down onto the Emerald Coast. Of course, his buddy Sonic is there to dust him off as usual.

MILES "TAILS" PROWER

Tails, who greatly admires Sonic, spends the game trying to beat Sonic to the end of each level to prove himself. Since Tails is slower than Sonic, the essence of Tails' game is using shortcuts by flying. His first task is to defeat Eggman's Egg Hornet, but his first level is Windy Valley. Tails is also your pilot in the Sky Chase scenes, which incorporate breathtaking graphics and a *Panzer Dragoon*-like control scheme. Tails' special weapon is the Rhythm Broach. An ancient ornament from a tribe of fighters, it allows him to perform a special Tail attack.



Amy's adventure begins when she's returning from the store and a small bird drops from the massive approaching Egg Carrier, which

AMY ROSE

blocks out the sun as it drifts slowly over the city. Eggman sends a huge robot down to retrieve the special bird, and the chase is on. Amy's levels are spent knocking back and running from the relentless robot who thinks he's Robert Patrick in T2. Amy uses a huge mallet to spring into the air and also clobber the opposition. Once she finds her special item, the Feather of the Warrior, she can perform a brutal spinning attack. Her adventure begins in Twinkle Park. Check out the side game for some 60fps racing action!





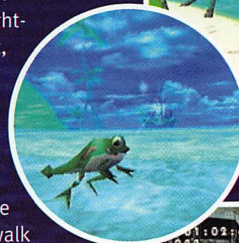
E-102's story is one of the most intriguing. He and five others like him were created by Eggman. For an Eggman endeavor, however, they are somewhat low-tech, so expectations of their performance is low. While Eggman is giving out their simple directives, this particular model experiences a major glitch and seemingly develops a conscience and some semblance of emotion. As a result, his game is spent hunting down and killing his brethren. His ending ties in beautifully with Amy's story. E-102 may look slow but when he compacts he can scoot rapidly. He attacks with a *Panzer Dagoon*-like homing laser, and once you find his special power, the High Output Booster, he can fly!

E102 ユー



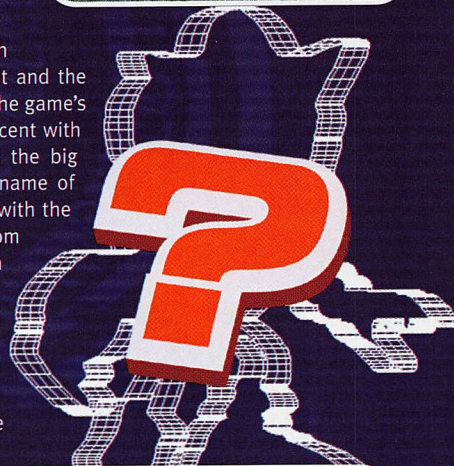
I played Big's game last for obvious reasons (he's a big, slow character who catches fish) and then found myself pretty addicted to his masterful fishing game. Big's story is pretty straightforward: his toad gets spooked at the outset, swallows a Chaos Emerald and runs away. So in each level, Big must find the pool where it is swimming and catch it with his rod and reel. Aside from some special bait located in the Icecaps, his special item is the Life Belt, which allows him to walk underwater. He can also use his weight to bust through ice. Big's game is pretty short, but it's a clever diversion and surprisingly fun.

BIG THE CAT



Much to my amazement and the cause of utter glee, at the game's end, after finishing 100 percent with all six characters, up popped the big question mark and the revered name of Super Sonic, the manic Hedgehog with the spiky yellow Dragonball-like mane from *Sonic 2* – Yuji's best cartridge Sonic, in my opinion. Super Sonic has only one goal: the ultimate destruction of Perfect Chaos, the huge beast you've seen in CG emitting from a towering office building. This is one of the most epic boss encounters in gaming history and the crowning jewel to one of the greatest games I have ever played.

SUPER SONIC



SuperH
HDC engine

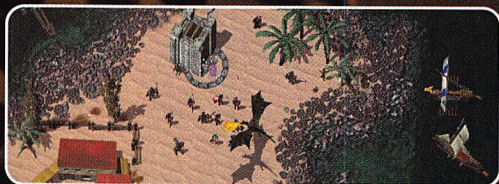


XG
XGite



I don't know what it is, but there's something about fantasy/medieval-based real-time strategy titles that really gets my blood pumping. *WarCraft II* ruled my social life for over a year, the theme behind *Age of Empires* shielded the horrible AI problems from my eyes for months, and hardly a day goes by without me firing up *Myth II* for a few games. Sure, I love *StarCraft*, *Command & Conquer* and *Total Annihilation*, but there's something about games that allow you to control a group of mages that's...well, more magical. So, it's with little wonder that *TA: Kingdoms* instantly rose to the top of my anticipation list when it made an appearance at last year's E3. Hey, the original *Total Annihilation* was a blast to play; what could be better than KBots with little swords and wizard hats, right? Much to my surprise, quite a bit.

Despite a similar graphical style and the *TA* logo branded in the name, *Total Annihilation: Kingdoms* has much less to do with the popular RTS game that preceded it than one might think. This isn't just a fantasy add-on pack for the original game; *Kingdoms* is an evolution of sorts, whose changes are presented in not only appearance, but are far reaching enough to contort the very core of the gameplay itself. Of course, cosmetic updates are the most apparent: gone are the gray and boxy robots that dominated the battlefields of old, replaced with incredibly detailed and well animated little archers, dragons, and catapults; Barracks and Mage Towers now take the place of KBot Labs and Vehicle Plants; and arrows and hurled rocks are now the distance weapons of choice. But these are all changes that should be expected from a game of this nature, and as impressive as these new graphical updates might be, this is not where *Kingdoms* truly excels.



UNIT PRODUCTION: **RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**



Arrows are strung and blades sharpened...
The forces of good and evil clash upon Darien's soil!

TOTAL ANNIHILATION KINGDOMS

BY RYAN LOCKHART





When asked why people play *Myth* over, say, *StarCraft*, the basic answer's almost always the same: resource management. Who wants to worry about creating and keeping track of a bunch of little peons whose gathering skills are vital to your success? Well, I sort of like it, but still – we're supposed to be generals, damn it! We want to fight, not worry about our resources running out. One of the reasons I enjoyed the original *Total Annihilation* so much was that it gave the RTS genre a breath of fresh air in this department, and presented a very practical way to manage your resources. Need more energy? Build another Fusion Reactor. More metal? Find another patch of that shiny stuff and pop down another Moho Mine. You never had to worry about depleting a supply of resources. It was easy, it was fun, but later in a game it got cluttered and messy.

Its unique take on resource management could be considered *Kingdoms*' greatest offering to the RTS genre, because much like *TA*'s, it's easy to use, although it doesn't really exist. Well, it does, but you don't really need to worry about it. Confused yet? Let's start with the basics. In the world of *Kingdoms*, Mana exists everywhere. Mana permeates every building and allows them to summon, build or train new units; it flows through certain characters and gives them the ability to clone themselves; and it's the source of all creation and life. Unfortunately, you can only draw so much Mana at a time from your starting source (your Monarch, similar to *TA*'s Commander). Once you've got that third Barrack up and are training away on all three, you begin to stretch your available Mana too tight, and something's got to give – therefore your efficiency drops. Although those buildings might have been pumping out groovy cannon soldiers at a rate of one per minute a few seconds ago, trying to train another set of them from that new structure throws a wrench into the gears, and suddenly you notice these dudes are appearing thirty seconds slower than they used to. To put it simply, there's a certain amount of power you can draw from, and although that power will never run out, plug too many bulbs in and you'll notice the light start to dim. What to do when this happens? Claim another source, if you feel the need.

KINGDOMS

! TOTAL ANNIHILATION

The cool thing about *Kingdoms* is that you don't need to hunt down Mana sources (hexes on the ground) like Minerals in *StarCraft* or Metal in *TA* – new power isn't totally vital to your success. You could just build away at your main base, defend it well, keep an eye on how much you're building, and you'll come out ahead. Remember, searching for more Mana is fine, but you'll need to spend the time and troops to defend that new goldmine of yours, something your opponent will most certainly see as a vital target. Either way, the player with the better tactics still has the advantage. Neat, eh?

While *Kingdoms* still "feels" like *Total Annihilation*, and fans of that series will be able to pick up this game right away, they'll need to change their old habits quickly to be effective. Lasers and bullets are no more, and aside from the ever-popular archer, most of the ground combat is done melee style. You'll be expected to send your troops into the heat of battle if you want their swords to be effective, but you had better bring in some archers in case your opponent sends in another wave of harpies...

The updates go far beyond new unit tactics, though the most noticeable of these is that rush attacks are now almost useless, thanks to one of the coolest new features in this game: buildings that shoot back. Why the hell didn't anyone think of this before? Don't people live in those structures? So, now it's nearly impossible for a small band of grunts to take down a barracks, as it will be firing arrows into them the entire time. Even the late-game rush, in which a player will take hundreds of large units into his opponent's base, has been addressed. While you can still mount huge attacks, the more powerful characters in your army are limited – meaning you can still muster up a few hundred grunts, but you'll have to be happy with ten of those giants and only one super dragon.

Each of the four forces that makes up the *Kingdoms* universe (see final page for more information) is unique not only in its appearance, but also in its elemental orientation, and by that account, the units it can produce. Of the 160 initial characters that will stake their lives in *Kingdoms*' battlefields, very few are similar to one another. Sure, everyone will have their foot soldier and longer-range fighter, but after those basics, the selection diversifies quite a bit. If you

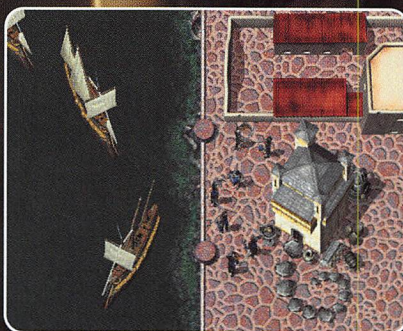
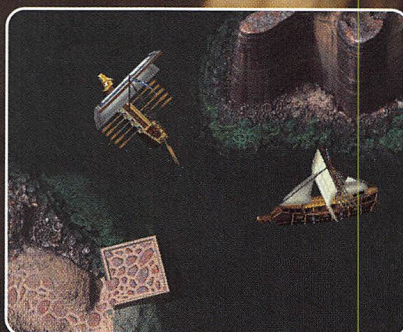
play Taros, you'll find most of your units are magic users, which can cast spells and such. If Aramon is your choice, get ready for gunpowder and large blades to come into play. All these sides are balanced, though, so a good Veruna player can effectively wage war on land, although he has a natural advantage in the waves. Your soldiers will also gain experience in battle, giving them better aim and resistance. Theoretically, if you keep your basic men alive long enough, their strength could compare with the much more expensive units later in the game.

Another nice addition is the fact that playing each of these forces doesn't limit you to just familiarizing yourself with their specialty units; there's a unique technology tree that goes along with each one. The two good guys have the traditional basic pyramid of technology – they start with the smaller buildings and work their way up. On the other hand, Taros can construct their most powerful buildings right away, but that early in a game it probably wouldn't be a smart idea to concentrate on the more powerful (yet slow building) units first. Zhon, warriors of the air, follow their nature by always being on the move, and have almost no structures to call their own – and instead concentrate on mobile ways of reproducing.

Of course, many of the changes in *Kingdoms* are those that you might never notice. Cavedog took this opportunity to replace, clean up, or optimize nearly every tool that was used originally in developing *Total Annihilation*. The AI is now incredibly tight, the rendering engine was re-written from the ground up, the program that creates and animates the units has been updated, and even the maps themselves are being built using enhanced software. *Total Annihilation* could almost be seen as a training course of sorts for the designers and programmers who would eventually create *Kingdoms*...

Of the over 40 people now working on *Kingdoms* – more than double the amount that were responsible for *Total Annihilation* – nearly 75 percent of them are artists – and it shows. I liked the way *TA* was animated, but that was about all the visual credit I'll give the game. On the other hand, *Kingdoms* not only seems to have way more animation, but the detail level is second-to-none. The swordsmen have multiple attacks, flying creatures will flap their wings differently depending on the speed (they used videos of bird flight for reference!), and the cannon dudes actually push their weapons around, light the fuses and then cover their ears when they fire. If you broke down the frames of animation each unit has, taking into consideration each of them can be moved in 360 directions, it would number in the hundreds of thousands. Impressive stuff.

There are plenty of other small details packed into *Kingdoms* that I wish I had room to talk about. The fact that all units will heal themselves over time, the improved line-of-site system, how dead humans can be resurrected, the patron deities that can appear in a battlefield and wreck havoc, the amazing music – there's so much. But now it's time to wait and hope that the final product is half the game I recently saw. If Cavedog can pull this ambitious project off, and everything's balanced correctly, there's a chance a third player might join the other "big two" RTS developers in gamer's minds. We'll see this March...



A Storyline Fit for a King...

Total Annihilation was a great game, but few could argue the fact it had a weak story. Missions rarely evolved past the "Arm is on the planet, crush them!" or "Watch out for that new Core base, take them down!" conflicts. The game had just enough story to hang a war on, and not much else. Thankfully, the *Kingdoms*' team is using ample time to make sure the plot behind its latest game is one you won't soon forget, complete with twists, turns, and triggered events; complete a task, and a whole new slew of objectives could open up. Of course, there will be good and evil sides (see below), but instead of using that orientation as simply an excuse to fight, you'll learn exactly what makes the Zhon "evil," and what events transpired that led them into conflict with the peaceful Veruna people.

As it stands now, there are 48 total scenarios for all four sides, but it's all told in one continuous story. Designed to unfold like a novel, you won't just play one side at a time: after a few missions with Aramon you might suddenly find yourself controlling the dark Taros, getting a taste of the overall storyline from their side for a bit - breaking up the monotony of having to play a certain side all the way through before discovering what drives the other armies to war. Between each mission, you'll receive a cinema of sorts, whether it be in the personal letter of a soldier to his parents, or a decree from the king himself. These artistic spoken monologue and still-painting presentations will update you on the trials in the world of Darien, and each will bring you one step closer to discovering the truth...



The online gaming in *Kingdoms* will have the normal fair we've come to expect from integrated support, such as instant internet games over Cavedog's own servers, but it's the little details that make *Boneyards* so unique. Want a bit of simple fun? Try Capture the Flag for a bit. Want something a bit more epic? Join one of the four armies and battle for the fate of Darien, as every victory you receive puts your forces a bit closer to world domination. Join a clan and rack up victory points for real prizes, download new units as they become available, or just sit back and chat away with other *Kingdoms* freaks in special rooms.

Four Armies Wage War Across the Lands of Darien..

Earth, Water, Air, and Fire, each of these elements comprise the theme behind one of the armies of Darien. The first two fight for justice, and the latter, chaos. These forces - which rage war upon Darien's land, in her skies, and across her oceans - each has its own stories to tell, and unique powers to bestow. Who will you fight for?

EARTH

EARTH: The people of Aramon use the land beneath their feet to fight for justice. These righteous soldiers have the strongest ground units - sharp steel and gunpowder are among their weapons of trade - yet these once peaceful people lack the ways of the mystic arts.



AIR: Using the wind itself as transportation, the beasts of Zhon strike fear from the skies above. Having dabbled in the dark arts, these creatures can actually duplicate themselves, giving them very little use for ground buildings, and making them very hard to kill.



FIRE

FIRE: Demons, zombies, and magicians make up most of the remaining populace of Taros. This once beautiful land, now cracked and lifeless thanks to the consuming spells at work, is the center of all that is evil in Darien.



AIR

WATER: Once traders and fishermen, the Veruna people now use their seafaring knowledge for justice, and fight alongside Aramon against the evil that resides in Darien. The forces of chaos know to stay clear of the waves in Veruna.

WATER

*Set in a mysterious universe of enchantment, strength and technology...
Giants is a visually arousing blend of intense action and strategy*

If you are looking for a game that is truly alternative, one that is unique in just about every way, then looking beyond Planet Moon's *Giants* is looking too far. One of the more original, creative, and eclectic mixes of gaming concepts to come along in some time, *Giants* looks and feels like nothing else – a definite rarity these days.

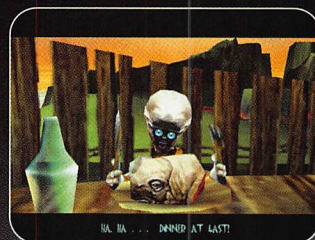
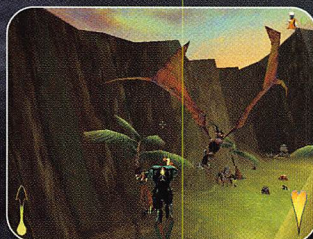
Radiating with color, much like an exotic fantasy painting, the environments in *Giants* employ a wide spectrum of hues that portray an outlandish alien world. But a painting this is not. It is truly astonishing to see the bustling 3D world shift and animate around you while marching across lush grasslands hugging endless oceans of glistening, strangely pigmented liquid. Reminiscent of Jim Henson's denizens found in the classic film *The Dark Crystal*, phantasmagoric creatures that could only be indigenous to this world are found grazing the land, navigating the atmosphere, and diving into the depths of the deep, iridescent seas.

But as unique and visually eccentric as this universe is, actually playing the game is initially quite familiar. Maneuvering your character or characters remains very true to the common keyboard and mouse scheme adopted by FPS players everywhere. However, running through the environments, mindlessly killing everything in sight, is not the objective of *Giants*, nor is it a good survival tactic.

While *Giants* is primarily a raging, action-packed conflict for geographical dominance, the gameplay also requires a good bit of strategic thinking, base building and resource management. Higher levels of technology, for lack of a better term, must be attained and can be earned by acquiring Smarties – midget aliens straight from a 1950s sci-fi flick.

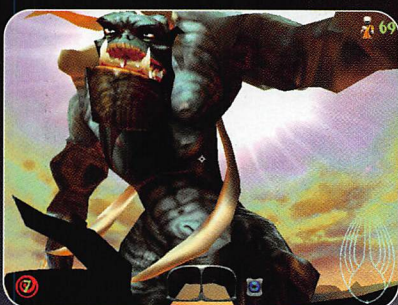
These big-headed extraterrestrials are incredibly intelligent engineers capable of constructing defensive and offensive weapons. As long as you keep feeding them and provide them with shelter, they will remain loyal to you and continue to manufacture their advanced inventions.

Giants' most conspicuous feature, however, is its three unique races: they are so diverse that balancing them, a task that is still far from complete as of this preview, is easily Planet Moon's biggest challenge. Kabuto, a lone giant that stands ten times the size of his tallest competition; the Sea Reapers, effeminate magical beings that can split into separate entities, conjure offensive elemental weapons and summon ominous beasts; and the Meccaryns, a humorous squadron of mechanical marines armed with high-tech weaponry and abilities.

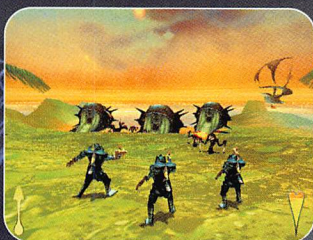


GIANTS

BY DAVE REES



While equally impressive in design, each of the three races in *Giants* presents a very unique gaming experience. Several Meccaryns (bottom) can be controlled as one unit; they follow their commander's every move.





GIANTS/019

PC/020
PLANET MOON/021
INTERPLAY/022

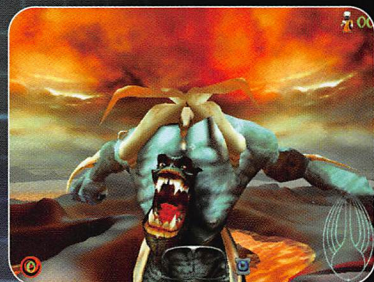
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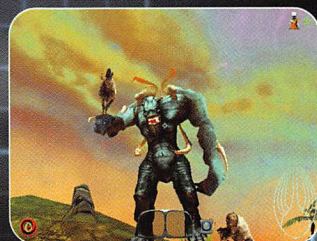
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kabuto

Standing several stories tall, causing a minor quake with each foot-step and able to crush his enemies with his bare hands, Kabuto is a menacing beast. But unlike the Meccaryns and Sea Reapers, he is a



one-man army, alone in his effort to conquer his adversaries. This presents some obvious shortcomings, but his endurance allows him to withstand the harshest of attacks for extended periods of time and his strength makes him a very dangerous target. Kabuto's most important resource is the Vimp, bizarre herbivores that graze the planet's grasses like sheep. To keep his energy level high, he must continually consume them; raising a secure farm of Vimps is critical to his survival.



Above, the Meccaryns use their high-tech weaponry to set fire to the local residences.



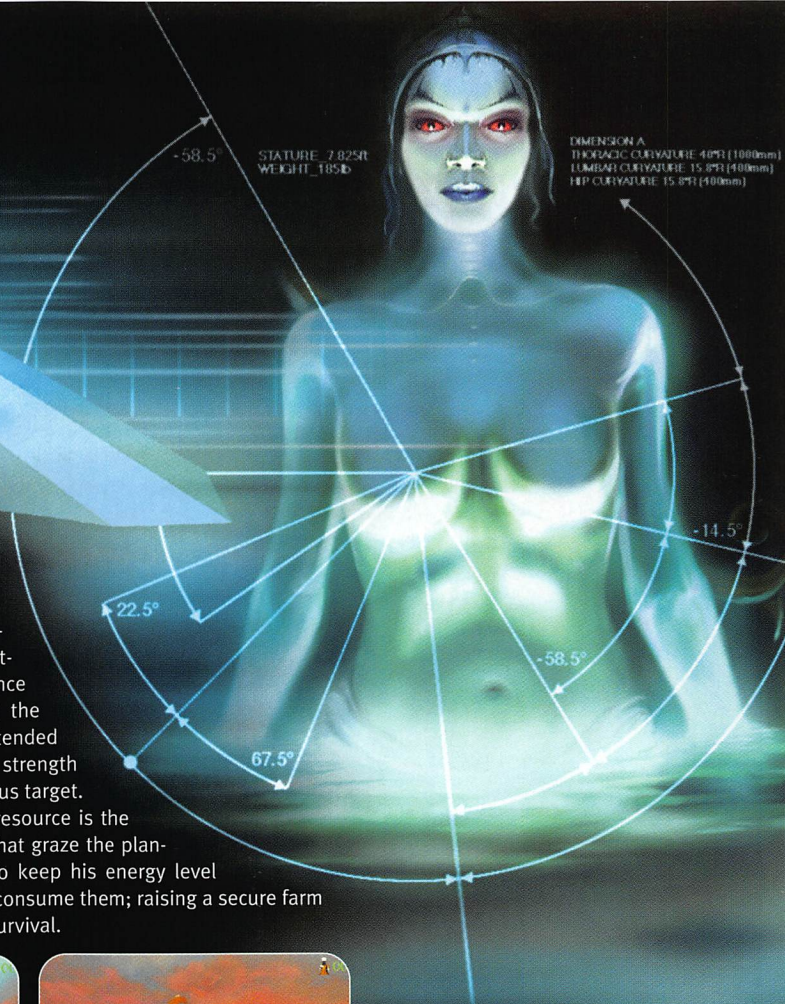
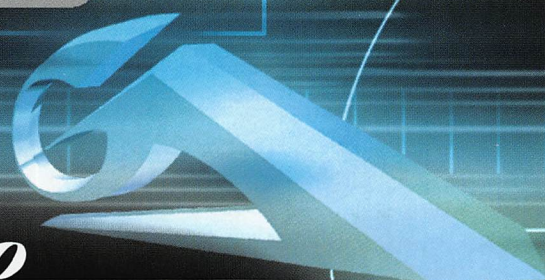
Humor is omnipresent in *Giants*, but is perhaps most apparent when playing as the Meccaryn race. Idle animation routines, such as scratching the crotch and blatant farting, epitomize the Meccaryn's rather carefree attitude toward life. This is no surprise: Planet Moon have roots reaching back to the ubiquitous *Earthworm Jim*, a game that thrives on its humorous overtones. The Meccaryns travel in squadrons, with, as of now, one commander and up to six mates, and are surprisingly easy to maneuver. While players can control them as one unified unit, the commander can give his troops commands, such as advance and attack any life in the immediate vicinity or hunt Vimps for meat. Looking to repair their crashed ship, they begin to scour the planet for resources, and end up in the thick of things in the process. Planet Moon are planning to release a demo very soon that introduces the Meccaryn race.

sea reapers

Graceful, animated, and fantastical by all means, the Sea Reaper is a mysterious creature armed with brilliant magic. Watching her body twirl and her arms thrust towards the heavens as she summons a monstrous sea creature merely hints at her arcane abilities. Visible in the distant waters, the beast dives to the ocean floor, collects several poisonous spores, swims to the shoreline and unleashes the toxic seeds from a gaping mouth big enough to swallow Kabuto. The surrounding atmosphere soon becomes toxic, killing everything within close range. A Sea Reaper can divide into separate entities – with each division a degree of opaqueness is lost – allowing her to occupy several locations.

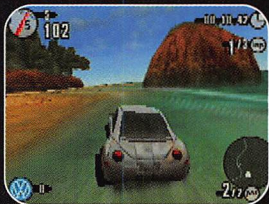


Like a siren, she is alluring. Like a demon, she is ominous. Like an angel, she is graceful. A Sea Reaper (above) divides into five entities.



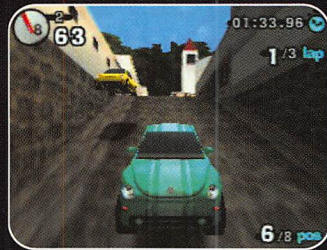
mecc

BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING



BEETLE ADVENTURE RACING

Volkswagen's undeniably cute, UFO-inspired New Beetle is about to make a huge debut on the N64 in a game that combines fast racing and vast, open landscapes. The game has actually been in development for some time, but Electronic Arts Canada have kept it under wraps as the execs at Volkswagen only recently granted them the official license to use the sultry new vehicle. It looks like



EAC's patience is going to pay off.

Beetle Adventure Racing, as its title indicates, presents a wide-open world of sprawling environments that players can not only race through, but also explore from the confines of their stylish bug. Yes, the objective is to come in first place, but much can be gained from straying from the beaten path and taking the scenic route. While tearing around corners on city streets, players can actually take a wild shortcut through a movie theater by crashing through the front door, cruising down the theater aisle and smashing through the widescreen. Other alternate routes will be accessible by breaking through roadside objects, such as crates, or discovering secret platforms that lead to eery torch-lit tombs. A multiplayer game for up to 4 players that pits you in a race to



collect items that are spread out across a large arena, which we were given the chance to test drive, is a great addition that adds significant replay value and enjoyment to the overall game. One question remains: Will a modern Herbie make an appearance? Maybe! We'll all find out in March. ☺

EA CANADA

NFS 4

Trying to compete with the likes of Sony's *Gran Turismo* and Namco's *R4* is a daunting task, but not one completely out of reach for Electronic Arts Canada. While *NFS 3* was an excellent racing title for both the PS and PC, it didn't quite measure up to *Gran Turismo*'s presentation, depth and graphics engine. Attempting to create a changing, unpredictable world, one that closely mimics reality, this fourth installment will include roadside events that alter the course itself. A landslide might occur, causing a logging truck to spill its cargo onto the street, which would result in a nasty road hazard and force players to take an alternate route or pull off some skillful maneuvers. At the same time, the artificial intelligence,



an area in which *NFS 3* excelled, is being improved to encompass a wider spectrum of computer-controlled personalities. But aside from unpredictable courses and exceptional driver AI, EAC are also improving the car models, an important component of any modern-day racing title. Improving the reflective high-lighting and adding nuances, such as working turn signals, the vehicle models will leave little to the imagination.





RUSH DOWN

Another extreme sports title on the horizon, *Rush Down* uniquely combines three events: mountain biking, snowboarding, and the untouched, other than a cameo in *Tomb Raider 3*, sport of kayaking. At a smooth 60 fps (single-player mode only) the game focuses on creating an arcade experience with a strong sense of speed while barreling down some of mother nature's most inhospitable of mountainsides. A powerful feeling of vertigo is felt as gravity pulls your bike down very steep hills, your kayak down cascading white waters or your snowboard over powder-covered slopes. Kayaking, while never seen as a

racing event on PlayStation before (we're not sure if it has appeared on any platform), is unfortunately the most uninspiring of the three events. The water, while wonderfully rendered, defies nature as it pours down a steep mountainside yet remains smooth as glass – not exactly an accurate representation of the sport. But this is an arcade game, not a simulation.

The game will also feature a horizontal or vertical split-screen mode, with a drop in frame rate, of course. Perhaps the biggest letdown is the absence of combat, a feature that was hugely popular in Sony's *Extreme Games* series. Given the arcade style gameplay, we can only imagine what

it would be like to knock opponents from their snowboards, mountain bikes, or beat them senseless with an oar while roaring down a mountain at top speeds. ☹



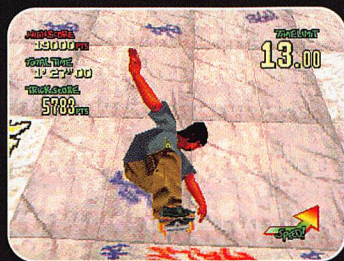
UNVEILED

STREET SK8ER

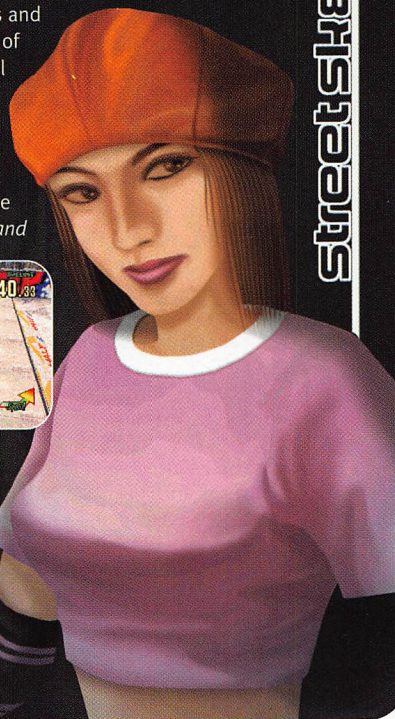
An extreme sport that has been mysteriously ignored to this day on 32-bit systems – other than a hollow appearance in Sony's own *Extreme Games* and *2 Extreme* – skateboarding is about to shove its way onto the PlayStation. Not limited to rolling down a windy mountainside roadway spotted with ramps and gates, *Street Sk8er* will require players to pull off a number of popular tricks while tackling a wide variety of courses. Half pipes, bowls and obstacle courses, city streets and boardwalks are all at your disposal. Consulting some of

California's top boarders, EAC made sure that the tricks are all extremely accurate. From k-grinds, 50/50 grinds, and nose grinds to 720 shove-its and switch double back flips, the variety is impressive.

What make the game so appealing and outright enjoyable are the many cinematic camera angles that display your character while he performs each trick – a sweet view of the skater is provided with each attempt when tackling the half pipe and bowl arenas – and the superb thrash soundtrack. Oddly enough, the game was originally produced in Japan by Micro Cabin, a development shop notable for RPGs such as *Sword and Sorcery* for the 3DO and *Riglord Saga* on Saturn. EAC are making many changes to tailor the game to the American gamer, including player experience points that can be distributed to abilities such as jumping, cornering and speed. ☹



STREET SK8ER

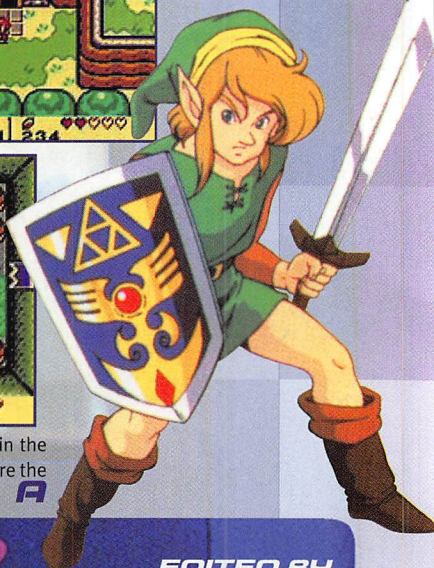
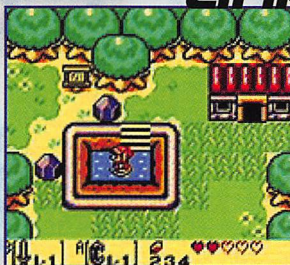


LEGEND OF ZELDA DX

LINK'S AWAKENING

NINTENDO - 1998 No sooner than *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* changes the world of video games for ever, Nintendo decide to revamp and re-release the 1993 GameBoy classic, *Link's Awakening*. This A-class Game has been drenched in cheerful colors, and thanks to the incredible GBC, looks and plays even better than before. The challenge remains as good as any other *Zelda* game (and even gives the 16-bit *A Link to the Past* a run for its money). An entirely new color-only dungeon has been added, along with a special photo-album feature that allows players to capture certain events and print them out as stickers using the Pocket Printer!

Link's quest takes place on Koholint Island, where he must wake the omnipotent Wind Fish (by collecting the eight musical instruments of the Sirens) in order to escape the island and return home. This little cartridge is filled to the brim with cunning dungeons, beautiful maps and locations, and really enjoyable story lines, which any *Zelda* fanatic will know and expect. Some aspects of the puzzle-solving have had top-gamers stuck for ages! It's a real blast, and considering how old the game is, it stands up exceptionally well to other, more technically advanced games in the genre. *Zelda DX* proves that, time and time again, Nintendo and Shigeru Miyamoto are the best video game creators in the world. Magnificent. **A**



GAME BOY COLOR

EDITED BY
BRYN WILLIAMS

MEN IN BLACK

The series

CRAYE - 1998 Of all Crave's initial Game Boy Color offerings, *Men in Black the Series*, while not a great game by any stretch of the imagination, is their best. I've quickly learned that 95 percent of the companies putting out Game Boy Color software are simply colorizing games that use the existing GB technology. This comes much to my chagrin after witnessing the many layers of parallax and huge characters displayed in Infogrames' *Smurfs*, the only game I've played so far that actually uses the upgraded technology in the new GBC. *MIB* does incorporate some cool cut scenes showcasing large characters from the animated series within its Xenophobe-like 2D gameplay, and I give Crave props for that. The character animation is quite smooth as well, and although the backgrounds are blocky chunks as they fade in the distance, at least they've attempted to imitate depth. In the end, though, *MIB* is little more than a colorized Game Boy game. While it may be a decent one by last year's standards, it's not enough to feed my craving for a genuine next-generation Game Boy game. **C**



TUROK 2

ACCLAIM - 1998

I don't really know what those people over at Acclaim thought they were doing with this particular title, but I wish they hadn't bothered. This dross sees the main character looking like Patrick Swayze in sweats running around a flat environment, being attacked by similarly crude enemies. After acquiring the correct duds and knife, you can warp into the past to attack poo-looking dinosaurs. Or you could just not buy the game in the first place. It's as simple as that! **D-**

QUEST FOR CAMELOT

TITUS - 1998 Following in a very similar vein to that of *Zelda DX* comes Titus' *Quest for Camelot*. Based on the Warner Bros. animated film of the same name, *Quest* sees you in control of Kayley, the daughter of a Knight of the Round Table. Your task is to explore the lands around Camelot, in an attempt to follow in your father's footsteps, and become a Knight of the Round Table yourself. With the aid of Merlin the Magician, you must recover eight pieces of parchment, which must be used to stop Sir Ruber from overthrowing King Arthur. Graphically, *Quest* tries hard to be *Zelda*, and while the use of colors are reasonable, you don't feel as though the characters and playing areas have quite the same polished feel about them. Many of the items and dungeons are also very similar to those of *Zelda*, but again, the experience lacks the same sense of adventure and enjoyment. If you are looking for a simple RPG for the GBC, the best advice I can give is to check out *Quest*. Real gamers stay clear and get *Zelda DX* instead. **C+**



Quite a few games for a normally quiet time of year. Besides *Rogue Squadron* scoring big (as expected) only a couple of games broke a B average, including the surprise games of the issue, *Tail Con-*

certo and *Syphon Filter*. His mom always told him he was cool, but even Cartman is suprised that *South Park* faired better than that tree-huggin' hippy crap, *Turok 2*! The upset of the season!



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

ABES EXODUS	A-		
CHARLIE BLAST	C		
CONTENDER	C+		
DEAD IN THE WATER	D+		
DARK VENGEANCE	C-		
KINGS QUEST: MoE	B-		
MARCH MADNESS 99	B-		
MONKEY HERO	D		
MYTH 2	A-		
NCAA FINAL FOUR 99	B		
NECTARIS	B-		
ROGUE SQUADRON	A-	A-	A-
SNOWBOARD KIDS 2	B-	B-	C+
SOUTH PARK	B		
STARCRAFT: BW	A		
SYPHON FILTER	B+	B	B
TAIL CONCERTO	B+	B+	B+
SOUTH PARK	B		
TPA: ANIMANIACS	C+		
THIEF	B-		
TUROK 2	B	B-	C+
UPRISING 2	B-		
UPRISING X	D+	D-	C

(A+) (A) (A-) (B+) (B) (B-) (C+) (C) (C-) (D+) (D) (D-) (F)

[A+ to A] Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature the highest quality visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. Example: *Zelda: OoT*

[A- to B] Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or any number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. Example: *South Park*

[B- to C] Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems and a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. Example: *Snowboard Kids 2*

[C- to D] Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. Example: *Dead in the Water*

[D- to F] Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. Example: *Batman and Robin*

1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.
2. Games marked in **BLUE** should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned]

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEW SYSTEM





ROGUE SQUADRON

BY MIKE HOBBS

*More fun than blasting Womp Rats, Lucasarts and Factor 5 deliver...
An incredible Star Wars shooter on N64*

Console *Star Wars* games have seen their share of ups and downs. From the pleasure of the first SNES game, *Super Star Wars*, to the pain of PS' *Masters of Teras Kasi*, just how well the modern myth would be served justice in the silicon world has always been in question. But I'm happy to report that with *Rogue Squadron*, Lucasarts and Factor 5 have delivered one of the strongest *Star Wars* console offerings to date. Not only is the play solid and fun, but the hi-resolution graphics when utilizing the 4-meg expansion pack bring the *Star Wars* universe to life with stunning results. Not since *Dark Forces II: Jedi Knight* on PC has Lucas' world been so accurately represented.

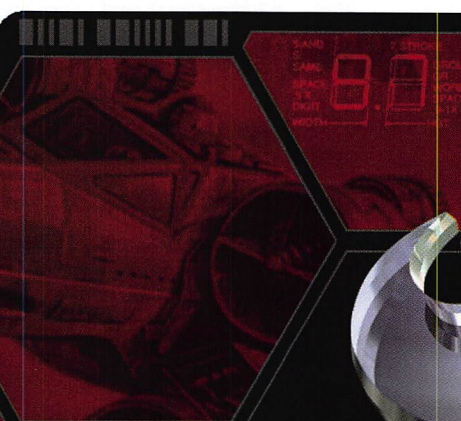
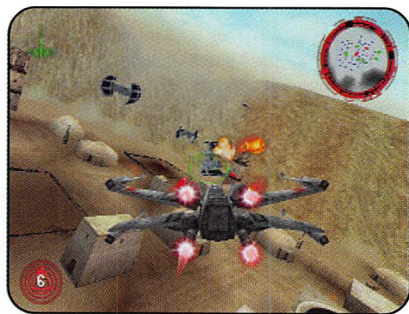
In concept, *Rogue Squadron* takes the free-flying Snowspeeder level from the inconsistent *Shadows of the Empire* to its logical and most satisfying conclusion by offering up four classic ships plus one new creation, the speedy and maneuverable V-Wing. From the canon, you've got the X-, A- and Y-Wings at your disposal, in addition to the Snowspeeder. All ships are beautifully modeled and detailed, though the rather uninspired design of the V-Wing doesn't hold up well against the originals.

In designing *Rogue Squadron*, Lucasarts and Factor 5 rightly concentrated on making an

action game with little of the sim overtones that drove the 3D PC titles such as *X-Wing* and *Tie Fighter*. Each of the fifteen missions relies heavily on shooting action, even when this involves protecting troop carriers or searching for downed comrades. The dogfighting action against Tie Fighters is simple and straightforward, designed at just the right speed to be thrilling yet still manageable and free of frustration.

But perhaps the biggest thrill from *Rogue Squadron* is its impeccable attention to detail. From the look of the myriad different worlds and the spot-on sound effects, you are surrounded by the very distinctive sights and sounds of *Star Wars*. You'll see Landspeeders zipping about in Tatooine and Cloud Cars zooming around in skies above Talooran, with all the requisite sounds accompanying the action.

If there are faults in *Rogue Squadron*, they're fairly minor. Graphically, the frame rate isn't silky smooth and a bit of fog is there, though both are quite acceptable when texture quality and polygonal detail are taken into consideration. Also, some missions are maddeningly difficult. But in short, this is a great 3D shooter made exceptional by the caring implementation of the *Star Wars* theme. **A-**



■ STRAIGHTFORWARD ACTION PUTS EMPHASIS ON FUN

■ PERFECT SOUND EFFECTS PULL YOU IN

■ FAIRLY GOOD CHIP rendition of WILLIAMS' MUSIC

■ REALLY SHOULDN'T BE PLAYED WITHOUT RAM PACK

REPUBLIC SAYS...

EASILY ONE OF THE STRONGEST *Star Wars* GAMES YET, *ROGUE SQUADRON* IS A BLAST OF A SHOOTER WITH UNWAVERING ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS OF LUCAS' UNIVERSE.

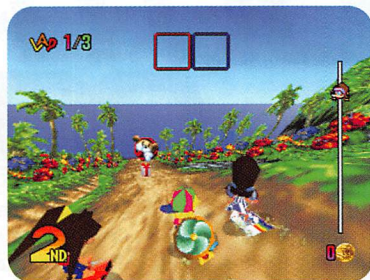
A-



Rogue Squadron
Rebel Starfighter Simulation

SNOWBOARD KIDS 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER



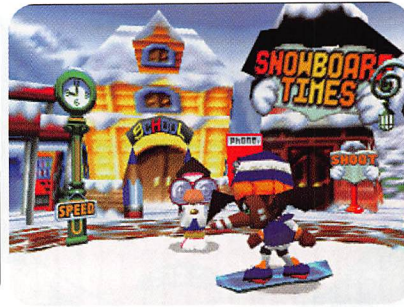
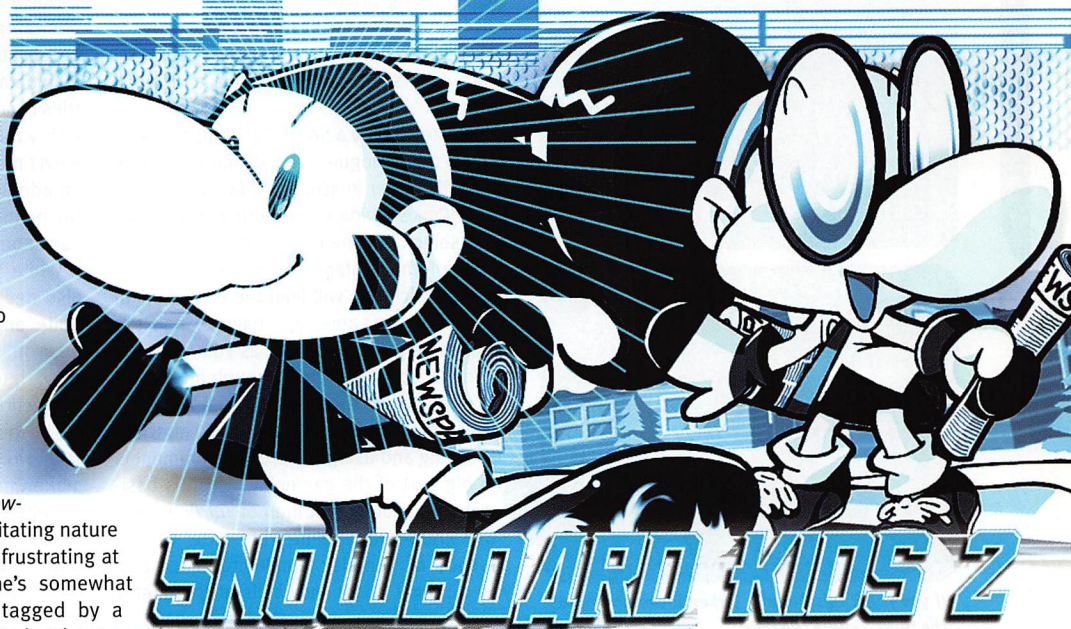
When placing a game like *Snowboard Kids 2* in such a light-hearted and fantastical place, the restrictions of a reality-based design are stripped away, and there is a liberating freedom to do just about anything. *Snowboard Kids 2* grasps this freedom – not to the extent that it could have – but its free style refuses to get bogged down by the game's occasional missteps; the more you play it, the more you have fun with it.

Snowboard Kids 2 creates a racing universe out of the inside of a house, a water-soaked jungle, a network of tubes floating in the depths of space, and many other entertaining and widely unique locations. The puckish characters, collective in their huge, exaggerated noses, may ride snowboards, but it is only the physics and the style of boarding down a mountainside of snow that the game is concerned with.

To open the generous selection of courses, persistent combat must be employed right along with competent racing skills. Power-ups, which include a parachute that sends the competitor soaring and propellers to add a burst of speed to your own car, are everywhere, and to neglect to pick them up is a death warrant; offensive and defensive power-ups strategy is hinged to victory. While weapon deployment is a fun part of *Snowboard Kids 2*, the excessively debilitating nature of many of the items is downright frustrating at times, compounded by the game's somewhat sluggish pacing: get tagged by a bomb, and you spend at least five seconds getting back up to speed. But once the nature and pacing of the game is accepted, commanding a first-place finish and successfully passing the boss encounters becomes an addictive pursuit.

Like in the original *Snowboard Kids*, coins must be collected on the tracks and tricks performed to add to the character's

winning totals. Once enough money has been earned, upgrades and customizations can be made to the snowboards at the game's tiny ski resort, and mini-events and hint rooms can be entered. Other scattered touches – such as riding a ski lift to the top of each course during the lengthy three-lap races, and character clothing matching level themes – make the game even more appealing. Add to this bright, colorful courses, quirky personality and a great multiplayer experience, and *Snowboard Kids 2* becomes a game difficult to put aside. ✨



■ SOLID COMBAT/RACING ON SNOWBOARDS—NICE TOUCH
■ ENTERTAINING, FANTASTICAL COURSES—GREAT VARIETY

■ GOOD MULTIPLAYER EXPERIENCE ALWAYS A BONUS
■ POOR MUSIC AND SOUND

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SIMPLE BUT UNDENIABLY ADDICTIVE, *SNOWBOARD KIDS 2* CAPTURES THE FLAVOR OF THE ALWAYS-ENTERTAINING MARIO KART FORMULA. GOOD, PLEASANT FUN.

B-





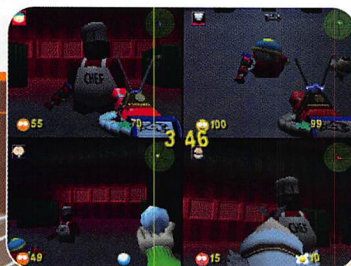
Join Chef and the boyz... and even Mr. Hanky, the Xmas Poo!
Grab a Toilet Plunger and help save...

SOUTH PARK

BY DAVE HALVERSON



If you think this big evil turkey looks bad from the front... check the rear!



■ YOUR PARENTS WON'T APPROVE!
■ SIDE-SPLITTING 4-PLAYER ACTION!

■ NO-HOLDS-BARRED ONE-LINERS INCLUDING ISAAC HAYES!
■ IT'S FOGGY IN SOUTH PARK!

REPUBLIC SAYS...

FINALLY! A FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER BASED ON SOMETHING OTHER THAN BLOODLETTING! ENGULFING GAMEPLAY AND RAW HUMOR HIT THE N64! SWEET!

B

TAIL CONCERTO

BY MIKE GRIFFIN

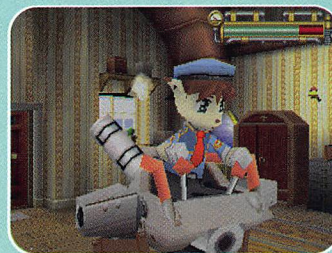
*Fantastic anime storyline and perfect characters.
Bandai deliver a compelling 3D adventure!*

This game is yet another convincing testament to the PS' continuing viability. Since I'm an avid Dreamcast player now, I tend to scrutinize PS games a little more closely. It's not a bias; I'm just expecting a lot out of the system as we head into its fifth year. Literally dozens of PS developers are now pretty much peaking the hardware, placing a heavy emphasis on refreshing, fun gameplay. Tucked away beneath the cluster of late-generation PS titles, *Tail Concerto* is a little gem that platforming and 3D adventure fans should seriously consider investigating.

In *Tail Concerto*, you're a dog, you're a cop, and you clod around in a cool steam-driven mech suit with powerful flapping arms. You'll guide the ever-diligent Waffle through bright, colorful, smooth environments that can be seen far off into the distance with no trace of ugly fog or pop-up. Almost everything you do, see, and hear is pleasing right away. There's plenty of high-

quality anime FMV, and even the light-hearted story moves along well. Even when you're just running around, accomplishing tasks by using the suit's flowing analog control is fun, just fun – but a little too easy. Even though there's plenty of in-game text, save games, and story breaks, at its core *Tail Concerto* is an action-adventure game. And by today's standards, it flies by quickly (in about nine hours). Every one of those hours spent riding mine carts, rocketing across floating islands and exploring the depths of fortresses moves along at a brisk, addictive pace. And to Bandai's credit, *TC* does get tougher near the end of the game, as it should. You're going to be playing it for more than just a week to beat it.

Tail Concerto's major flaw is its camera system. Back when I reviewed the import version, I crossed my fingers, hoping the translation team would take heed of my criticisms regarding the lagging auto-cam and simple tilt up-and-down camera controls. In later levels, the overriding need for a left/right (L and R) camera system becomes frustratingly obvious. You can work with it, though, and everything else about *Tail Concerto's* package is so solid, so undeniably attractive, it easily earns a recommendation for 3D adventure fans. ☞



■ GAMEPLAY FLOWS ALONG AT A BEAUTIFUL PACE
■ SUPER-CUTE CHARACTER DESIGNS AND ACTIONS.

■ ADDICTIVE MECH-SUIT PLAY MECHANICS AND CONTROL
■ A LITTLE EASY, A LITTLE SHORT, BUT 100% FUN.

REPUBLIC SAYS...

TAIL CONCERTO ISN'T BEING MARKETED LIKE OTHER CHARACTER-DRIVEN PLATFORMERS, AND IT'S PROBABLY SUPERIOR TO 90% OF THEM. THIS GAME IS WORTH THE MONEY.

B+



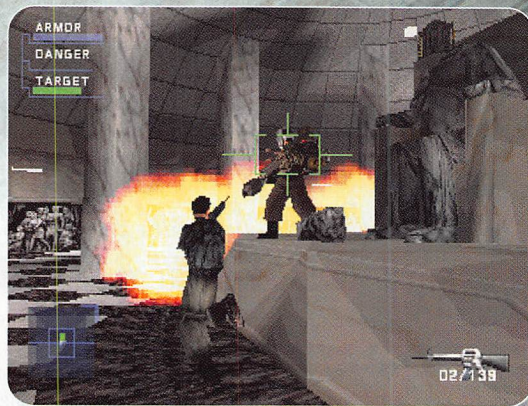
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Tail



Though somewhat mutilated by harsh graphical glitches, *Syphon Filter*, an amalgam of just about every action genre you can think of, is an exhilarating game of espionage, action, suspense and intrigue. One cannot help but see the game's inspirations immediately: elements of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Tomb Raider*, and *Golden Eye* are blatantly thrown into the mix. But regardless of the game's borrowings, it still manages to be a somewhat original, enjoyable action adventure that is, at the very least, worth a look.

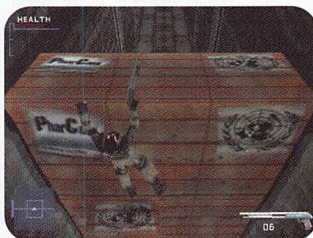
Driven by a plot that twists, dips and turns like a *Sonic Adventure* level, the game remains gripping and elusive through its course. Each mission introduces a new and usually surprising story element that keeps the objectives interesting and fresh. Players assume the role of Gabe Logan, a covert operative for a U.S. government agency, as he is put to the task of locating and eliminating Erich Rhoemer, a barbarous felon held responsible for a recent eruption of terrorist attacks across the globe. But each attempt to foil Rhoemer's unrighteous contrivance only provides another clue; the horrible nature of his motivations becomes clear much closer to the game's conclusion.



*A wicked virus is in the hands of a terrorist...
The world's fate rests in your capable hands!*

SYPHON FILTER

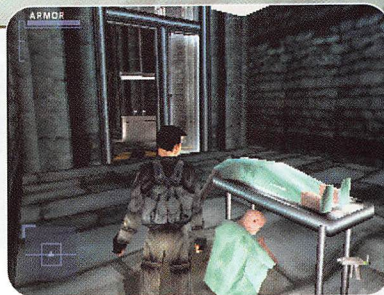
BY DAVE REES



Syphon Filter's missions are extremely diverse, precise and often require a wide array of tactical and strategic maneuvers. The game's diversity is primarily a result of its combination of the unique localities that Gabe must infiltrate and the varying objectives that must be obtained within them: protect city streets and subway stations from terrorist threats; protect scientists as they defuse bombs placed throughout a rain-drenched park shrouded in fog; and chase down an adversary through a museum of history. Tearing a page from Solid Snake's diary, and a setting from his photo album, Gabe enters a snowy military installation and stealthily places explosives at strategic locations, avoids detection at all costs, duels with a helicopter, rigs the missile silos with explosives, and escapes just before time runs out and the base is demolished. Eventually, he must explore a huge, gothic chapel, execute cowering, corrupt scientists and make his way into a dark series of bone-laden catacombs.

While exploring and uncovering mastermind plots, Gabe is armed with a formidable collection of weaponry. From a gratifying taser gun to a night vision sniper rifle to gas grenades, Gabe always has the hardware for the job. The game also features specific targeting: limb shots, chest shots, and instant kill head shots are all possible with careful aim. This comes in handy when conserving ammo is necessary.

S-Filter99



Syphon Filter's engine does a remarkable job of creating an overall cinematic experience while keeping the gameplay well intact, but does end up being at least one generation behind today's benchmark on the PS. The lack of Z-buffering is far too apparent: step too close to a solid wall and watch it melt into a viscous mass of liquid. Also, the polygonal integrity is sometimes lost, resulting in structures that are in front of your character to pop up behind him.



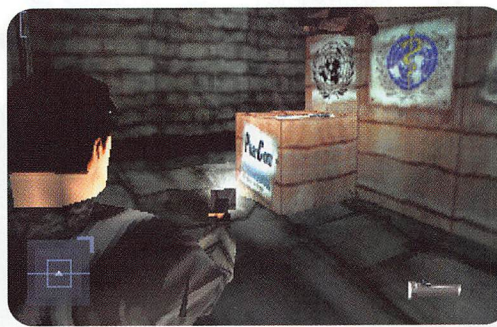
It is hard to ignore *Syphon Filter's* abrasive graphical shortcomings, but it is even more difficult to ignore the high degree of interactivity in its environments. Shooting a street light not only results in a convincing pop and a shower of polygonal glass tumbling to the ground, but also eliminates the light source that once lit the street below. Shoot an ornate chandelier and watch it burst into flames and slam to the ground in grand fashion. Hitting electrical panels or switches causes an emission of sputtering sparks. Players can also climb onto ledges that are not out of reach, hang, shimmy along ledges, creep, roll and strafe.

But what makes *Syphon Filter* a highly playable game is its comprehensive and intuitive control scheme. No matter what Gabe is doing, the targeting system always finds his nearest enemy and manages the camera angle perfectly, keeping its mark constantly centered on the screen. While running and strafing, players can easily target enemies and pick them off, even if they are sniping from rooftops or firing from below you.

Overall, *Syphon Filter* provides a challenging, very playable, engrossing experience that, while not visually or aurally magnificent, takes course through a believable, interactive world. Fans of *Metal Gear Solid* definitely apply.



A well-constructed piece of gaming that effectively combines action, puzzles and exploration, *Syphon Filter* manages to provide a splendid, suspenseful experience. The game's events are pieced together professionally, and the intuitive controls keep the game very playable and enjoyable.



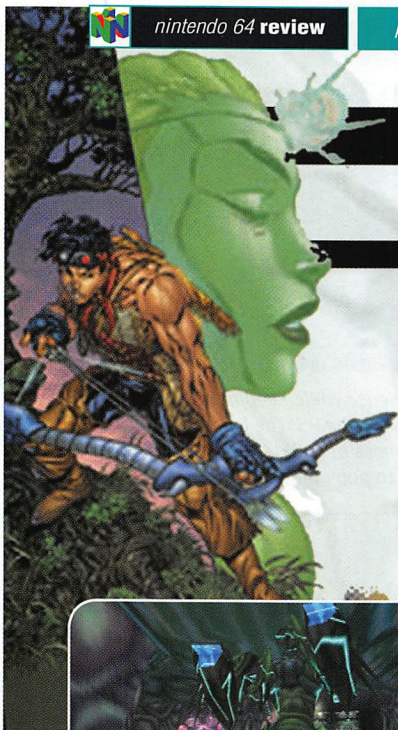
■ A GREAT MIX OF STEALTH, ACTION, AND EXPLORATION
■ HIGHLY INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

■ REFINED CONTROL SCHEME COMPLIMENTS THE ACTION
■ THE ENGINE IS A BIT ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES

REPUBLIC SAYS...

THOUGH SOMEWHAT MUTILATED BY HARSH Z-BUFFERING PROBLEMS, SYPHON FILTER IS A THRILLING AMALGAM OF JUST ABOUT EVERY ACTION GENRE YOU CAN THINK OF.

B+



Remember the movie *Phantasm*? The cerebral bore targeting system locks on to the cerebral cortex of its victims and launches a bore that penetrates the skull and empties it of matter... then explodes. Gruesomely entertaining.

Some critics say that *Turok 2* is a brilliant game. That it is the most beautiful game on the N64. That it has some of the most impressive creature designs ever seen in a video game. That its architecture reaches far beyond anything else on the N64. The praise goes on and on. To some degree these statements are not entirely unfounded, but many of its critics mysteriously ignored one element that is crucial to the playability of any FPS title: a solid engine.

With a wide assortment of inventive firearms and hand-to-hand weaponry, an undeniable favorite being the utterly wicked cerebral bore (see shots), the game's combat heavy action never becomes monotonous or boring. The option of switching to melee mode is a welcome addition; hearing flesh tear and blood fly as you chaotically swipe at an enemy with your razor sharp war blade from close range is disturbingly gratifying.

As an example of level design and texture mapping, *Turok 2* is strongly notable for its visual presence and intricately arranged localities. From the ancient Egyptian structures erected along the toxic river of souls to the deep, lush subterranean burrows of the lizard-like blind ones and the vast psychedelic mechanized hive of the mantids there is much originality, creativity, and diversity within each location. The game's powerful visual presentation remains congruent in the design and animation of the denizens inhabiting these peculiar lands, often causing an intentional pause in the action just

to inspect the meticulous workmanship.

Underlying *Turok 2*'s weapons and brilliant visuals, however, is a steady stream of technical faults that is far too affecting to ignore. Likely a result of rushing the product onto store shelves prematurely, the game engine is marred by some disreputable bugs that are inexcusable. Frustrating crashes cause unnecessary replay, extremely erratic frame rates and unresponsive controls hamper playability, and the draw-in rate often has trouble keeping up with Turok's movements. An otherwise highly refined gameplay experience is unfortunately degraded.

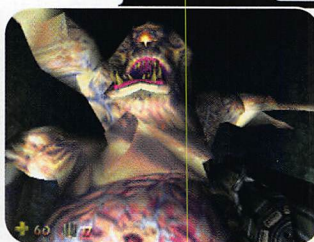
Turok 2 may present a more splendid example of visual finesse, architecture and level design than its predecessor did – much credit should be awarded to Iguana's artisans – but the overall result is severely serrated. ☹



It really is too bad that *Turok 2* suffers from technical faults. The sheer scope and beauty of this game are potentially immense, but are not fully realized.

TUROK 2

BY DAVE REES



■ STUNNING ARCHITECTURE AND TEXTURES
■ GREAT MULTIPLAYER MODE ADDS VALUE

■ THE FRAME RATE FLUCTUATES ERRATICALLY AND RADICALLY
■ TUROK 2 IS TOO AMBITIOUS FOR ITS OWN 6000

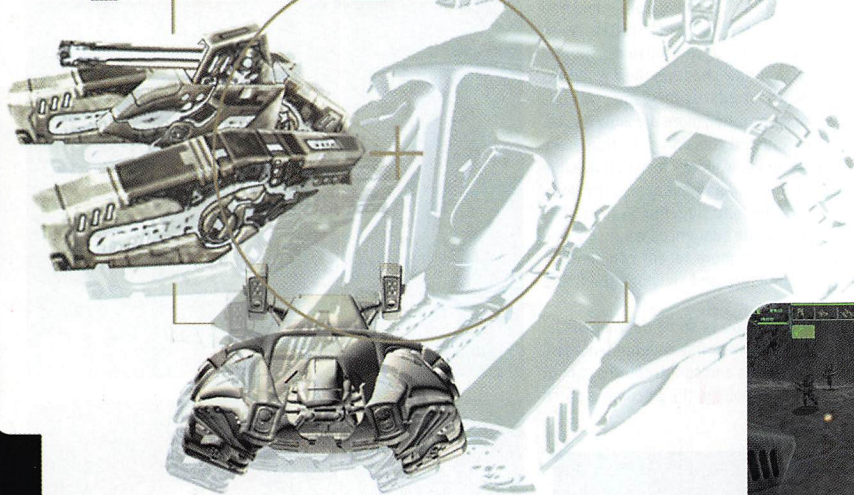
REPUBLIC SAYS...

A CONTRADICTING BLEND OF STUNNING ARTISTIC WORKMANSHIP AND TECHNICAL SHORTCOMINGS, TUROK 2 SOMEHOW MANAGES TO REMAIN ENTERTAINING.

B-



Uprising 2



The various maps are diverse, but the landscapes tend to be a bit bland. The action is so heavy though, it goes unnoticed.



High action complimented by an intuitive interface makes Uprising 2 very playable...

Depicting another stirring saga of interplanetary war, *Uprising 2* opens with a fledgling alliance, formed just after the end of the original *Uprising*, as it struggles to thwart an incoming threat from a ferocious high-tech alien race called Trich. Similar to its precursor in flow, look and overall tone, but refined in many ways, the game is a sure hit for fans of the original or anyone intrigued by the real-time strategy genre.

Proving their experience in melding intense 3D action with strategic campaigns (the original *Uprising* pioneered the concept) Cyclone Studios have made some appealing adjustments to the game's formula that improve its overall appeal. Control is now very intuitive, allowing for quicker responses and smarter management of units, which amounts to a more playable experience. A revamped HUD clearly presents the necessary information, while a brilliantly designed real-time map screen, replete with a small window in the upper-left corner that provides a miniature version of the normal game engine, makes your strategic options clear without compromising your ability to fight effectively.

Reminiscent of the classic strategy game series *Syndicate*, players must invest their precious funds into various areas of research to attain upgraded units and weapons between missions. Money is awarded for each completed objective and can be saved or spent on constructing bases during the battle scenes.

Slightly raising the game's cinematic appeal, a steady flow of

Uprising 2

BY DAVE REES

mediocre narratives dishes out melodramatic commands as the action erupts and subsides and erupts again. This approach is not exactly new, but it does compliment the intense battles perfectly and link each objective, which keeps the entire campaign congruent.

Aside from the exhaustive campaign and scenario modes, a comprehensive multiplayer mode keeps the replay value infinitely high. Setting up a deathmatch, cooperative or racing game (that's right, put your piloting skills to the test in a daring race against your friends) is simple, and the options are many.

While it still doesn't quite match the extraordinary gameplay and depth of Pandemic's superb *Battlezone* in my book, *Uprising 2* is definitely worth a look for anyone searching for a new 3D action strategy title.



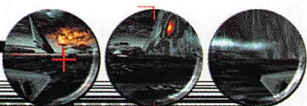
■ IMPROVEMENTS TO INTERFACE ARE SIGNIFICANT
■ MASSIVE, CHALLENGING CAMPAIGN MODE

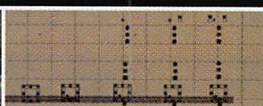
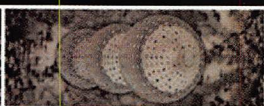
■ GREAT MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS
■ NOT QUITE AS DEEP OR INSPIRING AS BATTLEZONE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

A FINE CONTINUATION OF THE SERIES, *Uprising 2* PLAYS AND LOOKS MUCH BETTER THAN ITS PREDECESSOR, BUT FAILS TO BREAK BARRIERS.

B-





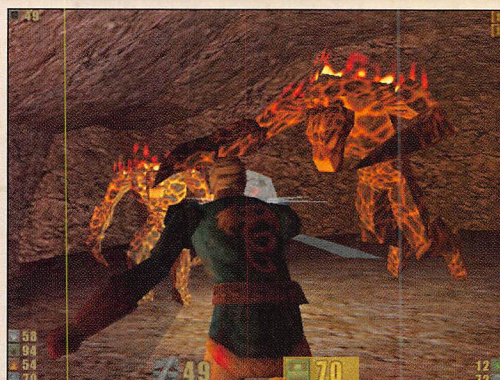
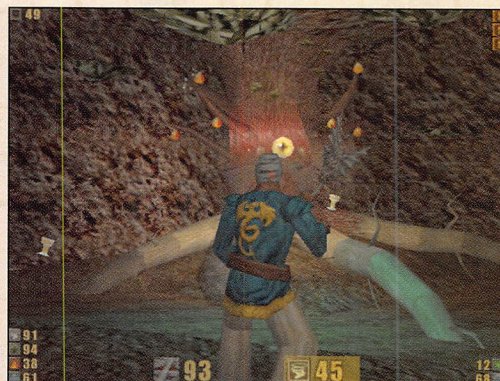
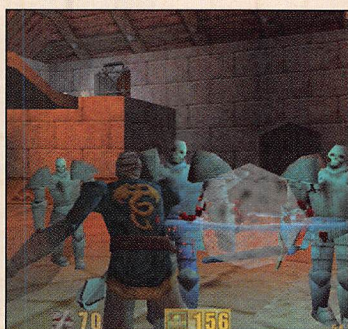
DARK VENGEANCE

DEVELOPER: REALITY BYTES PUBLISHER: GT INTERACTIVE AVAILABLE: NOW

Reality Bytes' dark, multi-protagonist third-person perspective 3D action/adventure game had tremendous potential, but ends up flat, and a bit frustrating. The three unique characters, each wielding weapons and abilities of his own, are all fueled by the same uncontrollable rage and vengeance, brought on by a personal loss due to an evil eclipse that now shadows their world. As a foreshadowing of the game's mediocrity, a poorly acted sequence introduces the game, which is different for each character and equally uninspiring. But this game has other, more pressing issues.

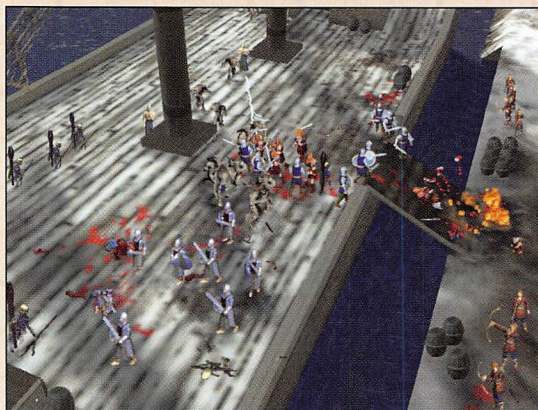
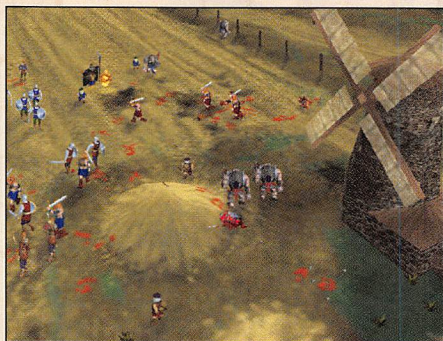
Weak mouse support, an inadequate camera system and antiquated collision detection make *Dark Vengeance* a game that is, at times, tough to endure. For example, walking close to moveable objects, such as a barrel, often results in the character inadvertently dragging it across the floor, and corners tend to be mysteriously laden with super glue. Also, the auto targeting system does not always provide a clear view of the marked enemy, making the battle sequences confusing and unnatural. Perhaps these shortcomings stand out due to the game's more recent competition: *Heretic 2*, a similar game that did everything right, and the recently released slew of superb FPS titles. Even so, the issues at hand are no longer acceptable.

In its favor, *Dark Vengeance* has a decent multiplayer mode and displays some dazzling visual effects: transparencies and real-time lighting add pizzazz to the otherwise flat environments and sometimes brilliant creature designs. But dancing lights, transparencies and cool creatures cannot save this game single-handedly, especially by today's standards. Hopefully, the upcoming patch will help. ☹



MYTH 2

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: BUNGIE AVAILABLE: NOW



Breathing new life into an old concept, Bungie's *Myth* took the real-time strategy formula into the dark ages, and brilliantly mixed in action and eye-pleasing carnage to create an original and wholly fun gaming excursion. *Myth 2* continues the tradition and expands upon it just enough to make it an absolute must-have title. Adding a wonderful arrangement of new units while maintaining a perfect balance across the board, and including plenty of enhancements – visually, aurally, and gameplay wise – the game is easier to grasp, more enjoyable to watch and listen to, and has enough replay value to categorize it as timeless.

Much of this sequel's greatness can be attributed to its new, intuitive interface, which allows for much easier management and movement of troops. Control is now mouse-friendly, which proves invaluable when the battles really heat up. New multiplayer modes, such as Assassin and the hilarious Stampede, prove that Bungie, a company that still develops and publishes their own games in the U.S., have what it takes in this age of creativity, innovation and ridiculously high budgets. And with the addition of full-featured editing tools, allowing players to construct their own carnage-packed scenarios, the package is well rounded.

Offering an engrossing and challenging one-player experience of 25 levels, which is scripted, animated and narrated with utter care, along with an unmatched multiplayer experience that has garnered a huge mass of devout followers, *Myth 2* has something for everyone. Special mention must be given to the simultaneous Mac and PC release as well. The *Myth* series is already a classic and will surely live long and prosper. ☺



STARCRAFT: BROOD WARS

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: BLIZZARD AVAILABLE: NOW



Brood War didn't have to be this good, really. Even if Blizzard's first official expansion pack for *StarCraft* only had the usual fare we expect from add-ons, such as a bunch of new maps, I would have been content. *StarCraft* is a near-perfect game anyway, so why screw with it? Of course, Blizzard aren't considered one of the best RTS developers in the world because they cut corners, and *Brood War* is a perfect example of their attention to detail. New maps are here,



of course. We have a new storyline that continues the fast-paced and twisting tale of the original, but that's almost a given. What really impresses me about this product, though, are the extra touches. You know, like the fact Blizzard took this opportunity to substantially re-tweak most of the units for each of the three races. Reavers are more powerful, Sunken Colonies hit quite a bit faster, and Ultralisks bound at you with a bit more speed. Oh yeah, there are also two new units for each race. Six new units! My god! All my strategies, those plans I've been perfecting for the last six months...ruined. And I couldn't be happier. There's nothing greater than getting into an almost depressing groove of a game you love, and then suddenly being given the option to totally re-think the way you play. And these new unit additions aren't just a bunch of weak grunts either: they each have the unique playing abilities you'd expect from Blizzard, and all strongly impact what you can do with each race. The Protoss now rule the skies if you have an army of Corsars at your command, Zerg take their burrowing skills to the next level with the powerful subterranean attack of the Lurkers, and even the lowliest Terran grunts can now stand up to substantially stronger opposition if they have a few Medics to back them up. And the scary part is, all of this newness comes from only the first of two planned expansion packs. I fear what the future could hold...

THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT

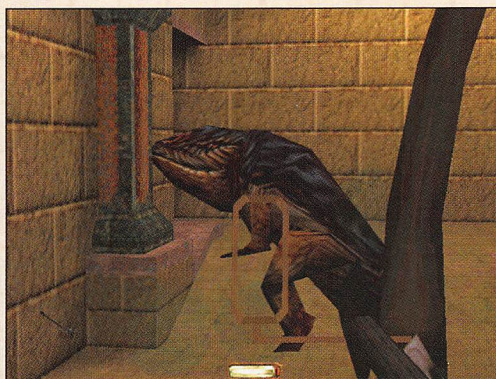
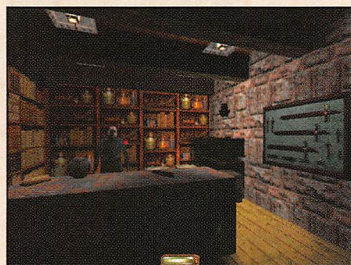
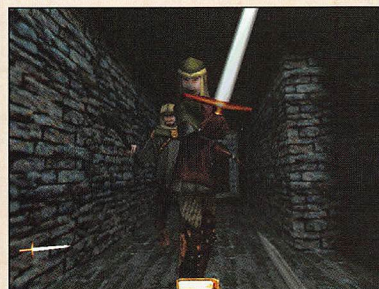
DEVELOPER: LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS PUBLISHER: EIDOS AVAILABLE: NOW



Thief: The Dark Project was almost a perfect game. For the first few days of play I was in a constant state of shock. The stealth-based gameplay was ingenious, the enemy AI was incredibly advanced, the level design was compelling. This game literally dripped with atmosphere, and by the time I finished level five, I knew it couldn't get any better. Unfortunately, I was right. Why, may I ask, did these talented developers decide to change gears in the middle of a game? What was wrong with sneaking through the shadows of castles and city streets, outsmarting or swordfighting guards to win your freedom, and then picking up and hiding their dead corpses? When was the decision made to populate half the levels of *Thief* with dim-witted monsters and zombies, and to add in a handful of subterranean levels that have you hopping around like Lara Croft? Why was the emphasis taken away from... well, thieving? Stealing from the dead is no fun.

Despite some of the later levels, I still love *Thief*. The first few areas alone remind us how a FPS doesn't have to be just about finding the biggest weapon. Looking Glass Studios force you to use your brain to complete each level, and give you plenty of options on how to go about doing this. Will you snipe the guard using your bow from afar (risk missing and having a slightly wounded swordsman calling for help), or will you use the shadows to try to sneak behind him before taking a blackjack to his head? You can swordfight if you wish, using realistic parries and stabs, but be aware of the second guard running in to help, alerted by the sounds of clashing blades. I remember leaving a dead opponent lying on the floor as I continued on my mission, and, while backtracking a few minutes later, hearing a guard call for help after seeing his fallen friend. From the shadows I watched them begin a room-to-room search for me (calling out taunting remarks as they moved), and as one finally spotted my hiding place, he fought me for a second before running back to gather some of his buddies to help take me down. That was so cool.

These kinds of little details are the reason *Thief* is still a great game, one I wholeheartedly recommend to those looking for something more in their first-person shooters. I just wish LG had drenched the rest of the game with the aesthetics the first few areas held – something I hope they take in consideration if there's a sequel.





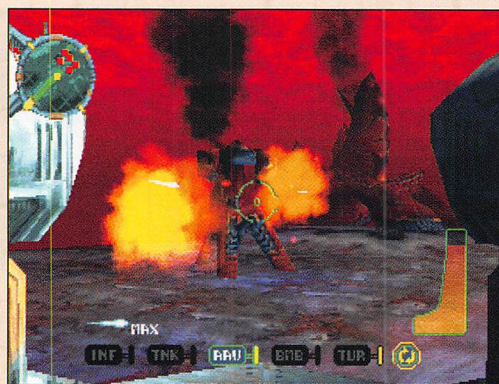
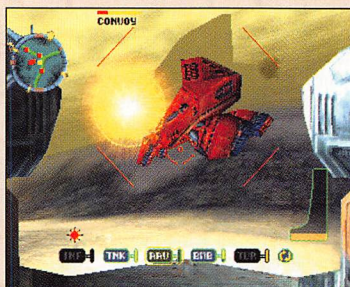
UPRISING X

DEVELOPER: 3DO PUBLISHER: 3DO AVAILABLE: NOW

Uprising X has promising ideas, but flees from them at breakneck speeds. The first moments in the game set an immediately sour note, as our heavily armed Wraith tank comes face-to-face with one of the roughest representations of human figures yet seen in a 3D game. One graphical blunder does not necessarily sabotage an entire experience, but these abysmal soldiers carry out their orders on crude, barren 3D planets that are the stage for futuristic military units of equally dull construct.

No game with visuals this lifeless can survive in today's climate, but the play mechanics in *Uprising X* make an indomitable effort to bail the game out. Merging see-it-and-shoot-it action elements with a touch of strategy, the game has us targeting masses of ground and air units while building factories in scattered locations to produce our own line of added force. At times the fighting is extreme, and when the Wraith tank cannot possibly cut into enemy lines on its own, allied units can be called in to aid in the offensive. Occasionally, the fighting can be taken inside the bases, where a first-person turret assault rips into oncoming forces.

Handled with more competence and complexity, the proper execution of these great ideas could have yielded an exciting military title. But even when the acceptable gameplay attempts to lift *Uprising X* off the ground, it is pulled down by the vacuous story and dialogue and languid visuals – the force of which no game-play in the world could possibly rescue. ❄



DEAD IN THE WATER

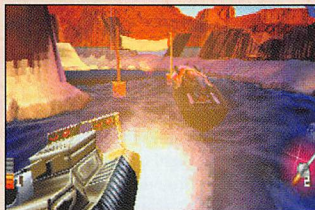
DEVELOPER: PLAYER 1 PUBLISHER: ASC AVAILABLE: NOW

Ultimately, it's in the gameplay that any title proves its worth, but when a game has graphics as haphazard and glitchy as ASC's *Dead in the Water*, it's easy to understand the importance of good visual presentation. Developed by Player 1 (responsible for *Robotron 64*), it's obvious that third-person 3D is not their forte.

Designed as a vehicular combat game on liquid, *Dead in the Water* serves up the typical cast of stereotypical characters like Sergeant Steel, Ebony Justice, and the straight out of *Deliverance* Crotchety Family. Each has his or her own unique craft with predictable differences in strength, speed, armor, and so on.

You have a choice of either racing or battle modes, though these two distinct styles of gameplay take place on the same horribly glitchy courses. The attempt at a real-time wave effect is unbelievably rough-looking as you splash down below polygons into nothingness, and is simply inexcusable. Worse, there are times when your craft can get stuck on scenery for seconds at a time. And forget about the two player mode. The draw-in is so close and so sloppy as to be almost unplayable.

The concept and control of *Dead in the Water* aren't that far off the mark, but its abysmal graphics are. It's far too late in the 32-bit game for this slipshod work to pass, and I can't recommend this game to anyone. ❄



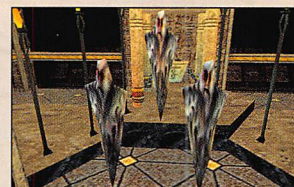
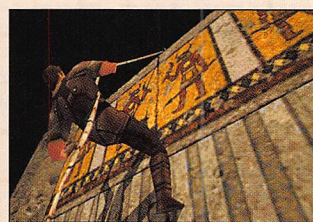
KINGS QUEST: MOE

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: SIERRA STUDIOS AVAILABLE: NOW

Combining role playing, adventure and combat, this eighth KQ installment is a great game in its own right. Find the four missing pieces of the Mask of Eternity, spread over the vast, sprawling worlds where you'll spend a great deal of time exploring. To dispense

with the many bad guys, there's a multitude of weapons to collect, and you'll need them – there's no mercy in this KQ, and you can die easily. Although graphics acceleration is needed to get the best from *Mask*, it's worth it: luscious greenery, decent character animation and attention to detail. Of course, no KQ title would be complete without the puzzle element, and some of these are tough and a sizable challenge for even the most accomplished gamer's gray matter.

However, the game is not faultless – almost unforgivable is the lack of a "smart camera." The camera work is all down to the player, and it certainly takes some mastering – I was clobbered on many an occasion simply because I couldn't operate the camera to see and attack multiple enemies at the same time. Also, the loading time between levels is way too long – it can be at least a minute or more. Those points aside, and the fact that I sort of miss the old KQ style, it was due for a change and *Mask* certainly provides that. ♣



all-format reviews →

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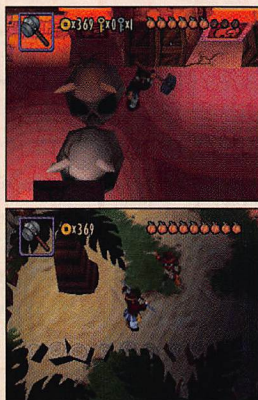
MONKEY HERO

DEVELOPER: BLAMI PUBLISHER: TAKE 2 AVAILABLE: NOW

The evil Nightmare King has dispatched his band of meanies to usurp the Dream King and pillage the Magic Storybook. Do you know what that means? Destruction for the hapless communities in *Monkey Hero*, an action RPG that makes the great *Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time* seem like a transcendent experience in comparison.

If this terribly inane story doesn't send you immediately fleeing, the stunted gameplay and anemic visuals are more than willing to drag you into the abyss. As Monkey, our most unappealing and lousily animated hero, explores the dungeons and planes of his lifeless, slow-down plagued world in search of the scattered pages of the Magic Storybook, dreadfully cumbersome weapon deployment becomes the first order of annoyance. Next up is the puzzle solving, which hints at creativity (I like the idea of capturing fireflies for light) but loses all effect when the solution to every situation is spelled out. Often times puzzles become nothing more than obvious, meandering tasks, and we find ourselves crushing obstructions and pushing blocks to open treasure chests, which produce keys that open nearby doors and special items necessary for later dungeons.

In a game in which bad sometimes spirals down into awful, there is a curious burst of life in a dusky spot under the low light of a graveyard. On the gravestones reads: "Good taste in advertising"; "Credible news reporting"; "Common sense: dead in the 20th century." It's like Robert De Niro showing up in an Adam Sandler film. ☼

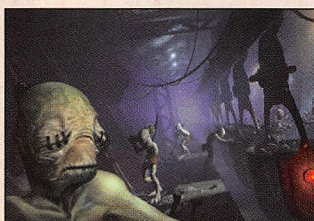


ABE'S EXODUS

DEVELOPER: ODDWORLD INHABITANTS PUBLISHER: GT INTERACTIVE AVAILABLE: NOW

"Hello...Follow Me." With their second game, *Oddworld: Abe's Exoddus*, Oddworld Inhabitants deliver greatness two for two. *Exoddus* picks up where the first game, *Oddyssey*, left off, with Abe having rescued 99 of his fellow Mudokons from Rupture Farms. Now, he's off to Soulstorm Brewery to rescue more Mudokons and discover the secret of the brew. While the gameplay is similar to the last game, a Quicksave feature has been added, which allows the player to save his or her place right before a particularly nasty spot, reducing the frustration factor found in the first game. This also allows you to spend less time re-tracing your steps and more time exploring, as you'll have to find all 300 Mudokons hidden throughout this game. As in the last game, Abe can possess the foes around him (providing they don't shoot him first) and use Gamespeak to communicate with his captive friends. In *Exoddus*, Oddworld also added emotional states to some of the Mudokons, which Abe must overcome before they'll follow. Angry and depressed Mudokons need a hand of sympathy, while laughing gas-induced Mudokons need a hand of a different kind to snap them out of it.

Exoddus advances Abe's story, and further refines the emotion that the player feels while playing the part of Abe. Some may say it's just a 2D platforming/action/puzzle game, but it's the best-looking, most solidly playing game of its class. And it's more than solid mechanics, gorgeous graphics, and strong gameplay; I'm saving my friends. It's the emotional ties to the game and the strong storyline that will keep gamers coming back for more. "Follow me..." ☼



NECTARIS

DEVELOPER: HUDSON PUBLISHER: JALECO AVAILABLE: NOW

Just about anyone who owned the TurboGrafx or PC Engine played *Military Madness*. The simple strategy and melancholy tone was instantly accessible and infuriatingly addictive. Now a number of years on and with the likes of C&C lurking about, *Military Madness* comes to the PS as *Nectaris*. Featuring all new polygonal battle scenes and a slew of new maps, it's surprising how well the game has held up. And that's a good thing, because *Nectaris*' play is basically the same as it was on the Turbo.

Two forces are battling in *Nectaris*, the Union and the Xenon. Each side has access to the same type of units, spanning from tanks, missile launchers, troop carriers, and armored troops. You maneuver your units using the tried and true hex grid in an attempt to move a ground unit into the enemy base or destroy all opposing forces. Some maps feature neutral factories that, when secured, will give you an even larger arsenal. Using terrain and surrounding troops to your advantage, battles are played out between units based on strength and a small measure of chance – you don't have control during the skirmish. And while the 3D battles are ultimately effective, given their uncontrollable nature, they could be more dramatic and polished in appearance.

With maps from the original game, plus winning entries submitted in a contest in Japan, a slew of new maps and even a scenario editor, old-school *Military Madness* freaks will be in heaven. ☼

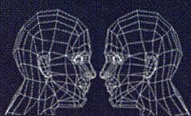


CHARLIE BLAST

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER: REALTIMEKEMCO AVAILABLE: NOW

Once in awhile we have to grade games that don't rely so much on graphics but on that peculiar commodity, problem solving. Many take solace in this somewhat laid-back genre, where your brain, more so than your reflexes, is put to the test (actually, *Charlie* requires a little of both). But how do you make a video game entertaining that is designed to drive you nuts? Easy: build it around a gruff and grubby laborer, butt crack and five o'clock shadow in tow, and make him stupid. And so it goes with *Charlie Blast*, a Bombuzal for the new millennium. The designers at Realtime certainly made it perplexing enough, and while graphically it's nothing to write home about, they serve their purpose as window dressing for the hideous puzzles that ensue. There aren't a whole lot of brain teasers out there, especially for the N64, so *Charlie Blast* should have no problem finding a home. ⚡





COUNTER + POINT



Rogue Squadron Factor 5/LucasArts/Nintendo

As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs (page 58)

EASILY ONE OF THE BEST STAR WARS CONSOLE OFFERINGS, ROGUE SQUADRON ON N64 SERVES UP FUN AND CHALLENGING SHOOTING ACTION WITHIN A THRILLING RENDITION OF THE STAR WARS UNIVERSE. IT REALLY SHOULD BE PLAYED WITH THE 4-MEG RAM PAK TO BE FULLY APPRECIATED, HOWEVER.



- DEEP GAMEPLAY, DIVERSE MISSIONS, AND A QUIVER OF SHIPS AT YOUR COMMAND
- EXCELLENT CONTROLS SOUNDTRACK THAT MATCH THE SPECTACLE OF THE ENHANCED GRAPHICS

Dave Halverson:

A-

THE FIRST 3D SPACE SHOOTER TO CELEBRATE SINCE STARFOX, ROGUE SQUADRON IS WELCOME INDEED. A FINELY POLISHED GAME ALL AROUND THAT MIMICS ITS STAR WARS THEME MASTERFULLY, IT WOULD BE A GREAT SHOOTER WITHOUT THE RAM PAK, BUT WITH IT, SHOOTING FANS WILL EXPERIENCE A NEW LEVEL OF DETAIL THAT I HOPE WE SEE MORE OF IN THIS CATEGORY. A WIDE VARIETY OF MISSIONS, OBJECTIVES AND SHIPS KEEPS REPETITION TO AN ALL-TIME LOW AND THE KILLER SOUNDTRACK AND VOICE HELP PUT THE PLAYER IN THE THICK OF BATTLE. LUCASARTS HAVE SHOWN SOME BIG-TIME NINTENDO 64 PROWESS HERE. ONE CAN ONLY IMAGINE THE JOY THAT THEY WILL BRING WHEN EPISODE ONE SWINGS INTO OUR THEATERS THIS SPRING.



- ROGUE SQUADRON OOOZES CLASS AND SMACKS OF SUPERB DESIGN.
- VERY OCCASIONAL RAM PAK FREEZE-UPS CAN OCCUR.

Bryn Williams:

A-

HAVING FOLLOWED ROGUE SQUADRON EAGERLY FOR MANY MONTHS NOW, I CAN FINALLY SAY THAT THE END PRODUCT WAS MORE THAN WORTH THE LONG WAIT. ROGUE IS EVERYTHING A GOOD STAR WARS ACTION GAME SHOULD BE. THE VEHICLES, CHARACTERS AND STAGES ARE SPOT-ON, AND YOU CAN DERIVE A SUPERB FEELING OF ATMOSPHERE AND FAMILIARITY FROM THE CLASSIC FILMS. WITH ALL THE HYPE OF EPISODE 1: THE PHANTOM MENACE AND THE FACT THAT ROGUE IS ONE OF THE BEST LOOKING AND PLAYING GAMES ON THE N64, LUCASARTS DESERVE TO ENJOY HUGE SUCCESS. DEVELOPERS AROUND THE WORLD SHOULD TAKE NOTE OF ROGUE AND ITS ACHIEVEMENTS, BECAUSE THE N64 NEEDS MORE GAMES OF THIS CALIBER, ESPECIALLY FROM AMERICAN SOFTWARE HOUSES.



Snowboard Kids 2 Atlus/Atlus

As Reviewed By: Grady Fiechter (page 59)

WITH BRIGHT, COLORFUL COURSES, QUIRKY PERSONALITY AND THE EXTENDING POWER OF A MULTIPLAYER EXPERIENCE, SNOWBOARD KIDS 2 IS THE PLACE TO RACE WHEN YOU ARE MISSING THE MARIO KART FORMULA.



- PINT-SIZED KIDS WITH HUMONGOUS NOSES, BATTLING DOWN THE SLOPES IS ALWAYS FUN.
- A SOLID ENGINE, RUMBLE PAK COMPATIBILITY, GOOD DEPTH AND HIDDEN SECRETS.

Dave Halverson:

B-

I WAS QUITE SURPRISED BY THE ENGINE AND DEPTH OF GAMEPLAY IN THE ORIGINAL SK. I DID HAVE A FEW MINOR COMPLAINTS, THOUGH, MOST OF WHICH HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED IN THIS WORTHY SEQUEL. FIRST, THE HARD-TO-HIT SKI-LIFT PROBLEM HAS BEEN RECTIFIED AND SECOND, THE OPTIONS (WITH THE ADDED VILLAGE) HAVE BEEN SUITABLY ENRICHED. ON TOP OF THESE ELEMENTS THE GAME IS MUCH BIGGER IN SCOPE AND FEATURES A GREATER ASSORTMENT OF LARGE-NOSED KIDS (THEY MUST USE TISSUES THE SIZE OF BEACH TOWELS) TO CHOOSE FROM. THE ONE ASPECT THEY WEREN'T ABLE TO FIX IS THE MUSIC, WHICH IS STILL ON THE SNES SIDE OF THE SCALE. IN THE END, A WORTHY MULTI- OR SINGLE-PLAYER RACER WITH EXCELLENT COMBAT ELEMENTS AND A GREAT SENSE OF HUMOR.



- GOOD, CLEAN FUN ON THE SLOPES (OR UNDERWATER FOR THAT MATTER), BUT LACKING IN ANY DEPTH.
- LOOKS NICE, BUT THE LARGE NOSES GET REALLY SCARY AFTER A FEW GAMES! HOPE THEY DON'T SNEEZE!

Bryn Williams:

C+

ATLUS' BIG-NOSED BOARDING LOONIES ARE BACK ON THE N64 FOR A SECOND BOUT OF RACING MAYHEM. BOASTING A MUCH-IMPROVED LOOK AND FEEL, SNOWBOARD KIDS 2 PROVES TO BE A FUN RACING TITLE THAT COMES INTO ITS OWN IN THE 4-PLAYER MODE. ONCE COMPLETED, THERE IS VERY LITTLE TO GIVE THIS GAME THE LONGEVITY OF, SAY, 1080 SNOWBOARDING, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, THE TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE - BUT THEY ARE VERY DIFFERENT GAMES. ALL IN ALL, SK2 FEATURES IMAGINATIVE SCENERY AND LANDSCAPES, RATHER SCARY LOOKING CHARACTERS, AND GOOD SOLID FUN FOR A FEW WEEKS. IF YOU LIKED THE FIRST ONE, THEN THIS SEQUEL IS A MUST-TRY.



Syphon Filter Eidetic/989

As Reviewed By: Dave Rees (page 62)

A GAME THAT DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM MANY OTHERS, BUT IS EXECUTED WITHOUT FLAW, SYPHON FILTER IS AN ACTION-PACKED EXPERIENCE THAT SHOULD KEEP PLAYERS ENTHRALLED THROUGHOUT ITS DIVERSE, YET SOMEWHAT SHORT, COURSE. ANYONE INTO 3D ACTION TITLES SHOULD DEFINITELY CHECK IT OUT.

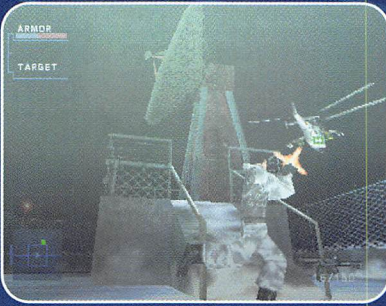


- EXCELLENT THIRD-PERSON CONTROLS AND A GOOD CAMERA TO BOOT.
- THE GREAT STORY DRAWS YOU IN AND THE DEEP GAMEPLAY KEEPS YOU GOING.

Dave Halverson:

B

SYPHON FILTER CAME AS SOMEWHAT OF A SURPRISE TO ME. NORMALLY WHEN A GAME OF THIS CALIBER IS BEING DEVELOPED WE HAVE MORE THAN AMPLE TIME TO PLAY WITH EARLY VERSIONS, FORM AN OPINION AND REPORT EARLY. BUT SF ARRIVED FOR THE FIRST TIME, NEARLY COMPLETE. NOT KNOWING WHAT TO EXPECT, I WAS MORE THAN A LITTLE EXCITED TO FIND A SKILLFULLY EXECUTED ADVENTURE WITH A LEAD CHARACTER THAT ANIMATES INCREDIBLY WELL, A SOLID ENGINE POPULATED GENEROUSLY, AN INTELLIGENT CAMERA, AND IMMERSING GAMEPLAY. ALL THIS WRAPPED IN AN INTRIGUING STORY WITH AN EXCELLENT SOUNDTRACK, SYPHON FILTER IS DEFINITELY ONE OF '99'S EARLY SURPRISES. A SKILLED MELDING OF WHAT WORKS IN 3D, I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT.

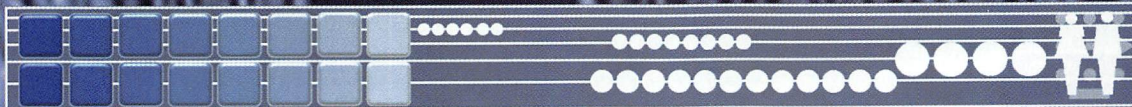


- THE INTENSE ACTION RELIES ON SOLID STRATEGY AND STORY TO KEEP THE GAME CONSTANTLY INVOLVING.
- THE GAME HAS THE AMBITION BUT LACKS A POLISHED AND STRIKING IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS AWESOME IDEAS.

Grady Fiechter

B

SYPHON FILTER IS, IN SOME WAYS, SIMILAR TO THE GREAT METAL GEAR SOLID IN THAT THE GAME ATTEMPTS TO DRAW US IN BY ITS CINEMATIC PRESENTATION. WHILE THE GAME IS A BIT AWKWARD AND UNPOLISHED AT TIMES, IT DROPS US INTO ITS GOOD STORY AND ALLOWS US TO CONVINCINGLY PLAY THE ROLE OF ITS PROTAGONIST AS HE ATTEMPTS TO QUELL A TERRORIST CELL. WHETHER DISARMING BOMBS OR SNIPING A TERRORIST FROM A BALCONY, NOTHING FEELS ARBITRARY, AND THERE IS A GREATER PURPOSE TO ALL THE INTENSE ACTION, WHICH PULLS US INTO THE GAME'S WORLD IN A WAY MECHANICAL, STRAIGHT-FORWARD ACTION COULD NEVER DO. SF IS A SOLID EXAMPLE OF THE NEXT STAGE OF VIDEO GAME DEVELOPMENT.



Tail Concerto • Bandai • Bandai

As Reviewed By: Mike Griffin (page 65)

TAIL CONCERTO IS PURE, UNADULTERATED FUN. THE FIRST TIME YOU MOVE WAFFLE AND HIS SUIT AROUND (WITH THE D-PAD OR ANALOG STICK) YOU'LL BE HARD PRESSED TO HIDE A SMILE. THE ANIME CUT SCENES ARE SUPER-HIGH QUALITY AND THE STORYLINE IS INCREDIBLY CUTE, JUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE IN TC. A LATE-GENERATION PS CLASSIC TO BE SURE!

B+

- A BRILLIANT AND FANTASTICAL LAND DESIGNED FOR GAMERS OF (DARE I SAY) ALL AGES.
- THIS GAME IS DOWNRIGHT FUN TO CONTROL BUT THE CAMERA COULD USE A LITTLE WORK.

Dave Halverson:

B+

FINALLY! I'VE BEEN ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE ARRIVAL OF THIS SURPRISING IMPORT EVER SINCE I FIRST PLAYED THE JAPANESE VERSION. TAIL CONCERTO IS ONE OF THOSE GAMES I ENTERED INTO WITH NO EXPECTATIONS, AND SO WAS OVER-JOYED WHEN IT TURNED OUT TO BE A FIRST-RATE 3D ACTION/ADVENTURE IN THE JAPANESE TRADITION. THE HIGHLY ORIGINAL MECHA DESIGN COUPLED WITH THE ORIGINAL CHARACTER DESIGN AND FANTASTICAL ENVIRONMENTS GRABBED ME THE MOMENT I BEGAN TO PLAY. WHAT KEPT ME THERE WAS THE SOLID 3D ENGINE AND INTRIGUING (AND EXTREMELY FRESH) GAMEPLAY. SO IT'S A LITTLE ON THE CUTE SIDE - C'MON, WE ALL NEED TO TOSS AROUND SOME KITTENS NOW AND THEN BETWEEN KILLIN' SPREES...



- AN EXCELLENT LOOKING AND INFECTIOUSLY CUTE 3D ACTION/ADVENTURE.
- THE QUALITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTS MAKES THE LACK OF A "LOOK" FEATURE ALL THE MORE FRUSTRATING

Mike Hobbs:

B+

I WAS ENAMORED WITH THIS GAME BACK WHEN I FIRST LAID EYES ON IT AS AN IMPORT, AND FOR THE MOST PART, MY FEELINGS HAVEN'T CHANGED. I LOVE THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC ANIMAL CHARACTERS, THE SETTING AND, MOST ESPECIALLY, THE LOOK OF THE GAME. WITH A STRONG ENGINE RUNNING UNDERNEATH THE COLORFUL AND IMAGINATIVELY DESIGNED ENVIRONMENTS, THE VERY CUTE AND ACCESSIBLE ACTION OF THE GAME IS INSTANTLY ENDEARING. RUNNING AROUND SNATCHING UP HOOLIGAN KITTENS IS GREAT AND ADORABLE FUN. TRUE, THE GAME MAY BE A LITTLE SHORT, BUT THERE'S NO DENYING THAT IT'S A GREAT AND UNIQUE EXPERIENCE - A BIT LIKE MEGAMAN LEGENDS, BUT FASTER AND MORE ENTERTAINING.



Turok 2 • Guana • Acclaim

As Reviewed By: Dave Rees (page 64)

BEAUTIFUL TEXTURES AND STRIKING ARCHITECTURE COMBINE WITH AN ENGINE THAT SPITTERS AND SKIPS A BEAT EVERY NOW AND THEN. BUT TUROK 2 STILL REMAINS AN ENTERTAINING GAME FOR THOSE WHO RELISH IN BIG GUNS, BUCKETS OF BLOOD, AND ABSOLUTELY MASSIVE LEVELS.

B-

- IF TUROK HAD FEET, I'D HAVE GONE THROUGH 100 PAIRS OF MOCCASINS.
- SAVE POINTS ARE TOO FAR APART AND BIG ENEMIES RE-APPEAR... A KILLER COMBO.

Dave Halverson:

B

ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE THIS AMAZINGLY AMBITIOUS CARTRIDGE GAME... BIG. MAYBE TOO BIG. MY BIGGEST BEEF WITH TUROK 2, EVEN MORE SO THAN THE FRAME RATE, IS THAT AFTER CLEARING NEARLY AN ENTIRE ENVIRONMENT (WHICH I'M GLAD TAKES MANY HOURS), FINDING ONE THING CAN TAKE SEEMINGLY FOREVER. THIS IS MORE EXPLORATION THAN I NEED. ANY CLUE WOULD HAVE BEEN GREATLY APPRECIATED TO EXIT CERTAIN LEVELS AND KEEP THE FLOW GOING. AS SOMEONE WHO NEVER USES STRATEGY GUIDES OR HINTS OF ANY KIND (WRECKS IT), I FOUND TUROK 2 INSANILY IN NEED OF THIS ONE ELEMENT. ASIDE FROM THIS, HOWEVER, EVEN WITH THE PROBLEMS (WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN IRONED OUT WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME), I DUG IT ENTIRELY. XLNT MUSIC, TOO.



- OCCASIONALLY STUNNING ARCHITECTURE, AMAZING CREATURE AND WEAPON DESIGN.
- NEARLY RUINED BY AN INEXCUSABLY INCONSISTENT FRAME RATE AND THE OCCASIONAL CRASH.

Mike Hobbs:

C+

TUROK 2 IS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF GAME DESIGN THAT IS SIMPLY TOO AMBITIOUS FOR THE UNDERLYING ENGINE. EITHER THE GAMES ARTISTS AND DESIGNER'S WERE PROMISED MORE THAN THE ENGINE TEAM COULD DELIVER, OR THE RUSH TO GET THE GAME OUT BEFORE CHRISTMAS NEGATED THE KIND OF TWEAKING NECESSARY TO GET T2 RUNNING AT A SMOOTH FRAME RATE. WHATEVER THE CASE, THE BEAUTIFUL TEXTURES, LEVEL ARCHITECTURE, AND AWESOME ENEMIES ARE VERY NEARLY WASTED IN A GAME THAT'S IN A NEARLY CONSTANT STATE OF CHUGGING. TUROK 2 IS STILL BREATH-TAKING AT TIMES AND HAS SOME OF THE COOLEST WEAPONS EVER SEEN, IT'S JUST UNFORTUNATE THAT THE EXPERIENCE IS PULLED SO FAR DOWN BY THE FUN-SAPPING TECHNICAL ISSUES.



Uprising X • 3do • 3do

As Reviewed By: Grady Fiechter (page 68)

UPRISING X HAS PROMISING IDEAS BUT RUNS FROM THEM AT BREAKNECK SPEED. BEFORE THE ACCEPTABLE GAMEPLAY HAS A CHANCE TO EVEN MARGINALLY ENTERTAIN US, THE POOR ENGINE AND DULL VEHICLES AND TERRAIN IRREPARABLY CRIPPLE THE EXPERIENCE.

D+

- HORRIBLE GRAPHICS MAKE THIS GAME TOUGH TO LOOK AT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME.
- UNINSPIRING GAMEPLAY TOPPLES WHAT LITTLE THE GAME HAS TO STAND ON.

Dave Rees:

D-

UPRISING ON THE PLAYSTATION IS AN UGLY MUTATION OF ITS PC COUNTERPART. WHILE THE GAME IS DEFINITELY EASY TO PLAY AND CONTAINS SOME ORIGINAL CONCEPTS, IT FALLS WELL SHORT OF ITS POTENTIAL. THE GRAPHICS ENGINE KEEPS THE GAMEPLAY MOVING AT A STEADY, ACCEPTABLE PACE, BUT ONE LOOK AT THE RESOLUTION OF THE TEXTURES (THE SKY LOOKS LIKE CANVAS) AND THE RESOLUTION OF THE INFANTRYMEN IS LAUGHABLE) AND THE SIMPLICITY OF THE ENVIRONMENTS REVEALS THE REASONS WHY. UNDERNEATH THIS EYE SORE IS A NUMBER OF CONCEPTS THAT SHOW A RAY OF HOPE, BUT IT ISN'T QUITE BRIGHT ENOUGH TO RESCUE THE GAME.



- THE DEFAULT CONTROL SCHEME IS A TOTALLY INTUITIVE SYSTEM. MOUSE LOOK STYLE WORKS VERY WELL.
- THERE'S SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH INTERESTING ACTION TO WARRANT EXTENSIVE REPLAYING OF THIS GAME.

Mike Griffin:

C

UPRISING X IS A BLAND LOOKING (ALBEIT SMOOTH) 3D SHOOTER WITH MINOR STRATEGY THROW IN FOR GOOD MEASURE. I LIKED THE CONTROLS, USING BOTH OF THE DUAL SHOCK'S STICKS TO CONTROL LOOK/AIM, THROTTLE, AND SIDE-TO-SIDE STRAFING. TOO BAD THERE'S VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF DIVERSITY TO KEEP ME GLUED TO THE SCREEN FOR LONG. I PRAISE THE BASIC CONCEPT OF ACQUIRING CITADELS IN ORDER TO DEFEND TERRITORY AND PRODUCE POWERFUL DEFENSIVE VEHICLES, BUT THE CORE VALUE OF SUCH AN OMNIPRESENT PLAY MECHANIC IS QUESTIONABLE. BETWEEN UNORIGINAL ESCORT MISSIONS AND TYPICAL DESTROY-THE-GENERATOR OBJECTIVES, SOME MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY SEEING THIS ONE ALL THE WAY THROUGH. JUST O.K.



For all its coverage of nearly every major genre, boxing hasn't been that well represented on the PlayStation. 989 Studios hope to change that with their latest localized product, *Contender*. Originally developed by Victor Interactive in Japan, *Contender* features a vast assortment of fantasy boxers – over 40 in all – ranging from svelte females to overweight blokes. This arcade-style boxer is more concerned with fun gameplay than simulating the brutal sport.

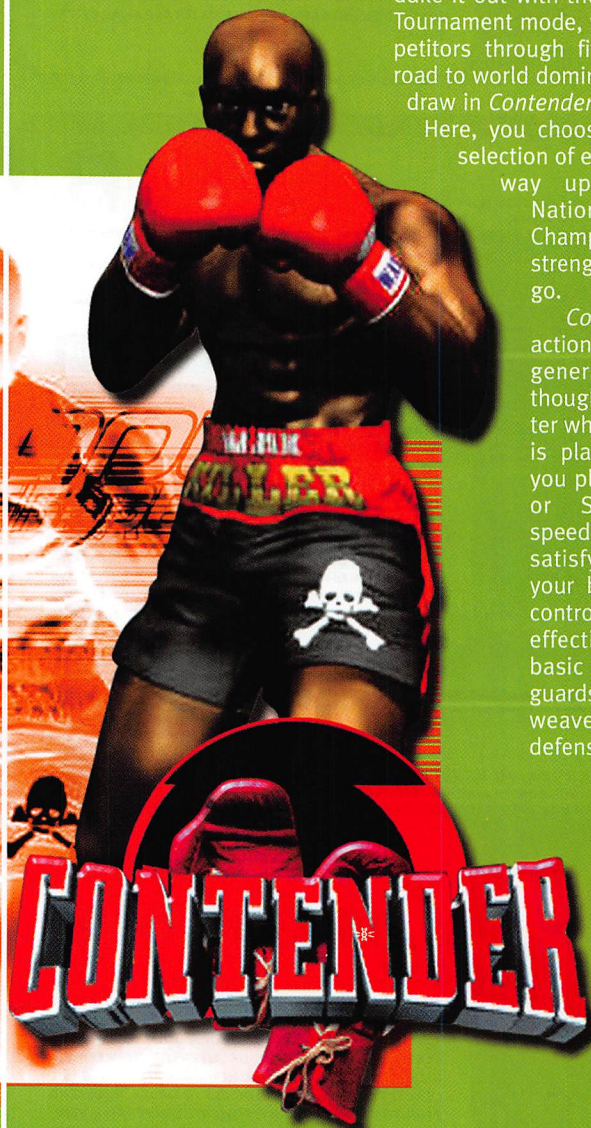
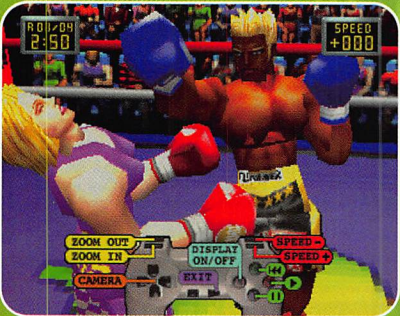
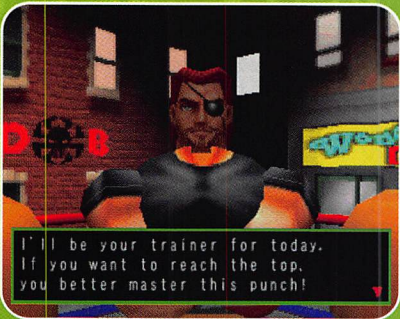
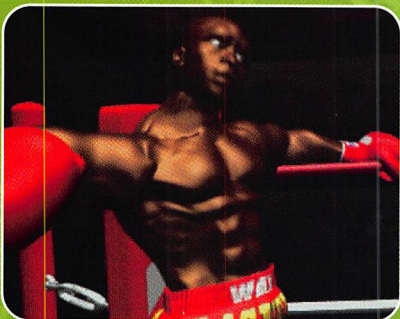
Several different modes of play are on tap in *Contender*, satisfying the need for either a few quick rounds or a long season of building up your own prizefighter in a quest for the world championship. In Exhibition mode, you can take on a friend in a versus match or duke it out with the CPU for a bit. In Tournament mode, you'll face 32 competitors through five rounds on the road to world domination. But the big draw in *Contender* is the Main Event.

Here, you choose a boxer from a selection of eight and work your way up through Local, National, and World Championships, building strength and skill as you go.

Contender's boxing action is deliberate and generally entertaining, though very stiff, no matter what speed the game is played at. Whether you play at Intermediate or Super *Contender* speeds, you never get a satisfying flow out of your boxer. As for the control, it's simple but effective. You've got basic high and low guards plus a bob-and-weave-style sway for defensive moves and dif-

ferent combinations of head and body blows for offense. Combos are performed mindlessly by multiple button presses and hooks are accomplished by pad and button combinations.

With serviceable control and play options, it's up to *Contender's* graphics to take it where it needs to go, and in this department, the game falls a bit short. The boxers are all distinctive enough in appearance, but are rather basic and suffer from sloppy joints. The rings, too, are simple and generally rough to look at. But like the rest of the game, the colorful graphics ultimately work as long as you're not looking for style or finesse.



CONTENDER

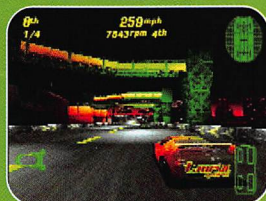
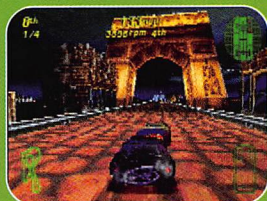
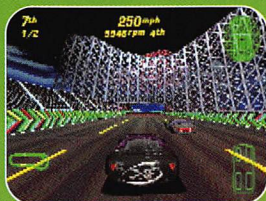
developer: victor interactive publisher: 989 studios available: now



With the insane popularity of NASCAR, it was only a matter of time before that sport's requisite star, Jeff Gordon, lent his name to a video game. An avid gamer since the ripe age of five, he has taken more than a passing interest in the development of ASC's *Jeff Gordon XS Racing*, enlightening the game's developers with his intimate understanding of high-performance car physics.



Rather than attempt a straight re-creation of the sport, which EA have done to financial, if not critical, success, ASC and Jeff Gordon are attempting no less than a reinvention of NASCAR. Taking the idea of what NASCAR might be like in the future and running with it, 300-mph cars and tracks with loops are the extreme result. You'll get to race against 12 other cars and eventually Jeff Gordon himself, who



As you can see, this is not your father's NASCAR. Wild locations and vibrant lighting effects will highlight both PS and PC versions, each pushing its respective hardware to the limit!

begins his role in the game as more of a mentor. Ten futuristic courses are said to be on tap, with wild configurations like a double figure eight and clover-leaf layouts with steep banking turns and jumps.

Due in March for both PS and PC, XS Racing looks to bring fast, arcade thrills and an extreme yet realistic physics model to this look into the future of NASCAR.

JEFF GORDON XS RACING

developer: asc publisher: asc available: march



Capitalizing on the 1998 baseball season, EA Canada's upcoming *Triple Play 2000* focuses on power hitting and presenting an expression of baseball through the emotions felt among players during the game. Nabbing Sammy Sosa as their spokesman – a huge endorsement to say the least – and employing a modern method of motion capture to add facial expressions to the in-game players, they are definitely taking the right steps.

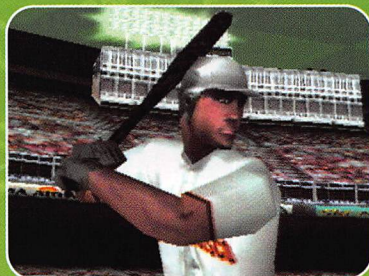
To improve the game's hitting, the batter's stance and timing will accurately affect the ball's direction and distance when struck. This will allow players at bat to read the outfield, and aim for gaps more readily. Also, it will

be easier to find that sweet spot on the bat resulting in an abundance of home runs, which will also improve the value of the home run derby feature that was well below inspiring in *Triple Play '99*.

An early version of *Triple Play 2000* on PlayStation was shown, and both N64 and PC versions are in development as well, but even so, it was evident that the personality of baseball will shine through due to the motion-captured facial expressions. Early sequences depicted players chewing gum, but the final game will include a long list of gesticulations commonly seen on the play field.

Other enhancements will include a vastly improved engine that will maintain a consistently high frame rate, a full MLB license, the mandatory rendered stadiums, and a wider array of camera angles to view the action.

It appears that, like the '98 baseball season, next year's *Triple Play* will recapture the essence of baseball.



TRIPLE PLAY 2000

developer: ea publisher: ea available: spring



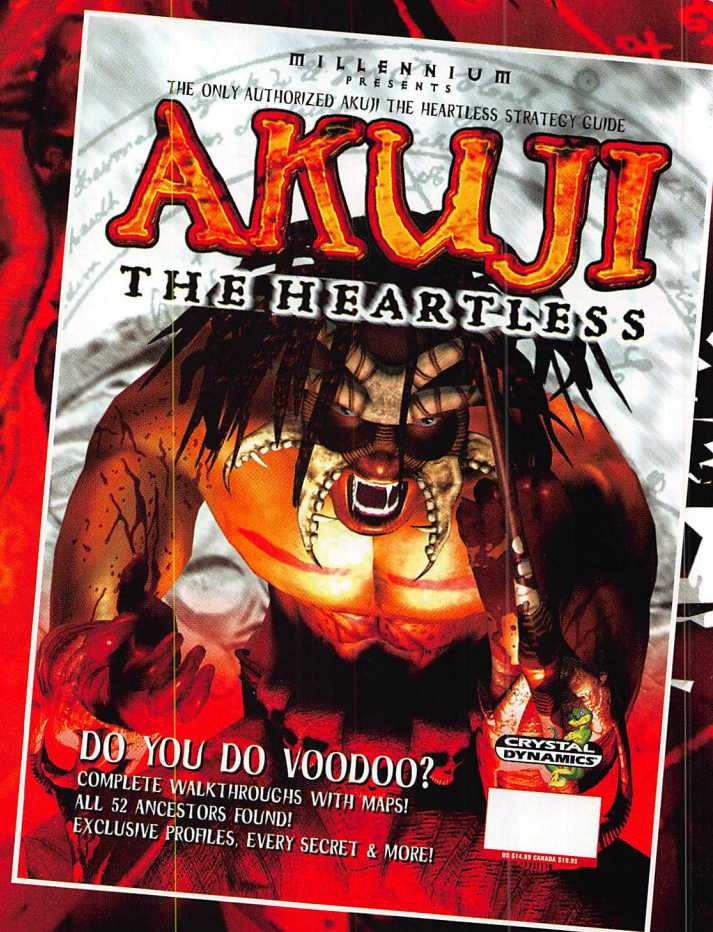
SPORTS: ACTIVATED





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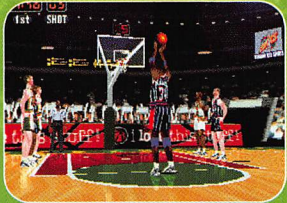
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Once again Konami provide sports gamers with a tremendously solid *game-play* experience, rather than a product bogged down by statistical madness.

I find it interesting that Konami's predominantly Japanese-programmed sports titles tend to play better than most American sports games. With *NBA In The Zone 99*, Konami give PS players a simple yet attractive interface, a consistent engine, and better-than-average (in terms of realism) player models. You can go all the way in Season mode, and arenas and their motifs are well represented. As mentioned, however, *ITZ99*'s shining highlight is its

speedy, responsive gameplay. Also, with incredibly fun (and well animated!) All Star Weekend events like the spectacular dunk contest, *ITZ99* delivers.



NBA IN THE ZONE 99

developer: konami publisher: konami available: 1st quarter



Never underestimate the skills of 989 Studios. These guys consistently produce good-quality software, and their sports lineup is no different. *NCAA Final Four 99*

is a fast moving (extremely fast, should you adjust the game speed), quick playing game of b-ball. It has obvious issues every now and then, such as guarding animations that cause players to slip-slide across the floor, but the game feels nice and immersing most of the time. This feeling is raised by the dozens of motion-captured animations, such as players waving in press formations as they approach the key and serious no-look passes. From the point of view of this being a basketball game, *NFF99* isn't nearly as intuitive as games like *In the Zone*, but as a college hoops game, it easily takes the crown on the PS.

NCAA FINAL FOUR 99

developer/publisher: 989 Sports available: now



The Animaniacs have been folded into ASC's popular *Ten Pin Alley* with predictable results.

With popular characters such as Brain (who of course sees

the bowling match as an opportunity to take over the world), Yakko, and Wakko, players should have little trouble finding a favorite.

Up to six players can compete in a tournament mode, and the decent bowling physics and adjustable skill levels make it a good little party game.

And while the characters look alright in 3D, the graphics are nothing to write home about. The new alleys are bright and basic, though the whole thing looks a little rough around the edges. Not a terrible game, but also not that special.



ANIMANIACS TEN PIN ALLEY

developer: saffire publisher: asc available: now



Ahh... March Madness is right around the corner, so at least we'll have some kind of basketball excitement this year! EA attempt to capture the explosive college game in *March Madness 99*, and, if it weren't for a few gameplay quirks, they could have nailed it full on. The presentation of *MM99* is absolutely rock solid, combining fantastic stadium decor and superb TV-style (really) instant replays that shuffle into the screen, then zoom away in a second to resume the game. Good stuff. In fact, the only real detraction is the slow-motion effect in the replays, which looks more like a major chug problem in

the graphics. Big deal. Most important, I think the game-play is missing a certain accessibility and responsiveness, perhaps due to the twitchy player control.



MARCH MADNESS 99

developer/publisher: ea sports available: now



GAMERS' REPUBLIC
SPORTS



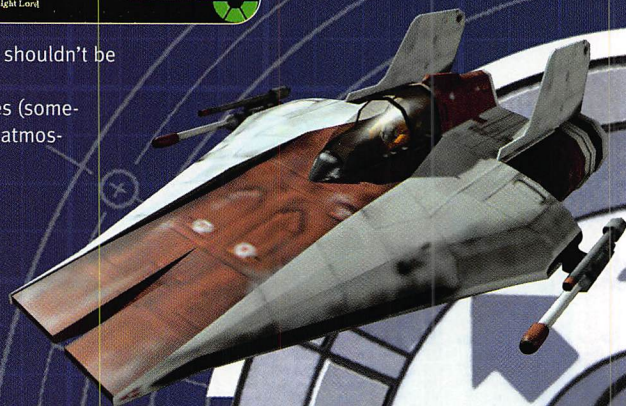
STAR WARS TRILOGY ARCADE

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With the near arrival of *Episode One: The Phantom Menace*, Sega's decision to release a Model 3 arcade game based on the first three movies is excellent timing and is likely to fuel the game's popularity as *Star Wars* mania sweeps across the world.

AM 12, previously known as AM Annex, whose past titles include *Sega Touring Car Championship* and *Sega Rally 2*, have broken away from racing games and decided to go for a 3D shooting game using a dedicated force feedback joystick. Using the latest Model 3 Step 2.1 hardware has allowed them to create a truly realistic environment faithful to the *Star Wars* movies, and with Lucasfilm checking everything to ensure its accuracy, even die-hard fans shouldn't be disappointed with the final result.

AM 12 have even licensed all the official music and sound effects from the movies (something Sega didn't do for *Lost World*), which really makes a big difference to the atmos-



ARCADE

phere of the game, via the cabinet's excellent sound system.

Star Wars Trilogy Arcade is basically a one-player game, in which the player rides, flies and shoots in some of the various vehicles that appear in the *Star Wars* movies, such as the X-Wing, Speeder Bike or Snowspeeder. This system is very similar to previous gun games, where players don't actually control vehicles themselves, but instead concentrate solely on aiming and firing. Although at times some control over your direction is possible, it's not to the extent that you need to concentrate much. This enables you to enjoy the impressive graphics and focus on the shooting without being distracted by the game's operation.

The game starts with you being able to choose between three stages. Although for Yavin you are always seated in your X-Wing, the Endor Forest and Hoth stages feature multiple areas where you are sometimes on foot as well. There are also two sub-stages in which you must use the joystick as a light saber, first to duel with Boba Fett and then Darth Vader. The final stage takes you back to Endor, this time to destroy the Death Star's main reactor.

COMING SOON!



Fantastic visuals, bristling energy, and a *Star Wars* universe – what more could you want in a game?



JOJO'S BIZARRE ADVENTURE

© HIROHIKI ARAKI & LUCKY LAND COMMUNICATIONS/SHUEISHA, © CAPCOM CO., LTD. 1998 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Jojo's Bizarre Adventure is one of the most popular long-running comic books in Japan. Its story is based around the notion that every person has an inner spiritual self that takes the form of the Stand, which they can use to fight for good or evil.

Due to the artistic nature of this high-quality manga, it was long thought impossible to be able to create this with animated CG, but with Capcom's experienced designers and the power of the CP-SYSTEM III, 2D graphics have been able to faithfully reproduce *Jojo* completely. Those familiar with the plot to *Jojo* will see elements running through the game, as it is based on the most popular episodes from

Chapter 3; however, Mr. Hirohiki Araki, the creator of *Jojo*, has worked with Capcom to add new characters and special endings that were never seen in the original comic.

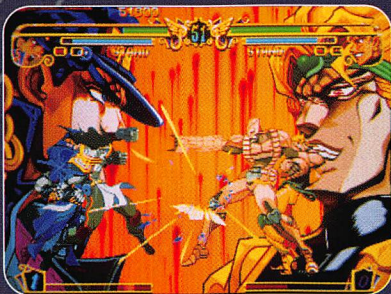
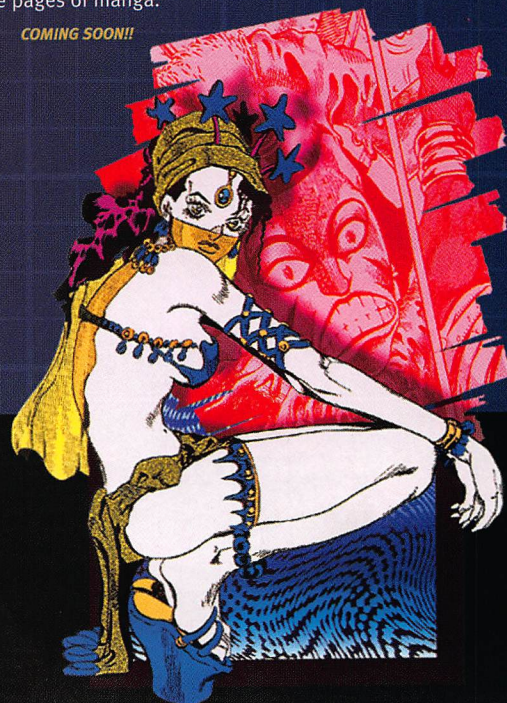
The game's entire combat system works around the Stand, which is a completely new kind of fighting style and has a very high strategic element to it. Along with your health and super combo gauges, there is a special Stand gauge. As you take damage, this is reduced, and



CORNER

when nothing remains, you can no longer use your Stand. The Stand, which is created by the energy of the character's soul, can be summoned in two ways: First, performing a special attack will cause the Stand to appear and carry out that attack. While it's fighting, you are still able to fight with your main character at the same time. Second, by pressing the "B" button you can call the Stand and take control completely while the main character stands by watching. In this mode, the Stand can perform combos and has powered-up special attacks. One of the most important features is the Tandem Attack, which allows you to program the Stand's attack and then, while it carries it out, you can fight simultaneously with the main character. This allows you to perform some surprise combos and keeps your opponent guessing as to your next move. In the one player game, there is a special Story Mode designed to look like pages of manga.

COMING SOON!!



What arcade report would be complete without information on the newest wares from Sega, Capcom and Namco? We have it! In addition, we have other beautiful and original

3D titles from Konami and Taito, and insanely refined 2D gameplay from some of the masters, SNK and Psikyo. These 8 games prove that arcade gaming is still alive and kicking.

LA MACHINE GUNS © 1998 SEGA ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Although not an official sequel, this game is based on *Gunblade NY*, and, as such, has you flying around with a massive machine shooting terrorists. This time around, war has broken out on the west coast of America with a mysterious android army called R.O.M (Rage Of the Machines). Rather than a helicopter, your character uses a special back pack that enables you to fly. With your increased maneuverability, the emphasis is on dog-fighting, and the enemy's enhanced A.I. gives you plenty of scope for mid-air battles. The floor of the cabinet has bass speakers built in that beat in time with your shots.

MAGICAL TRUCK ADVENTURE © 1998 SEGA ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Controlling a mining cart, you play Roy and Alma, chasing after two villains who have stolen your precious stone that has the power to move through space and time. By working together, you must use the pedals to jump and ride on two wheels to clear various obstacles on the track. The large levers move in sync, so communication with your friend is essential. There are six different stages, such as South Sea, Dinosaur World and Futuristic City, which can be chosen when the path forks, with four different endings depending on the result of the game's story.

ARCADE

POWER STONE © CAPCOM CO., LTD. 1999 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

Capcom's first NAOMI game is a fighting action game set in the 19th century after a previously advanced civilization collapsed. One of the items remaining from the past is the Power Stones that, when collected, allow the player to transform into a super being with amazing powers. You can jump, punch and kick, throw objects and pick up items such as swords and guns. Each of the main eight stages represents the home of one of the characters and is full of ledges, equipment and traps that you can use to your advantage. Visually stunning and lots of fun to play.

EVIL NIGHT © 1998 KONAMI ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Konami's horror shooting game has a unique three-gun cabinet. Two of the guns are hand guns, which operate as standard guns; however, by filling your special weapon gauge, you can shoot a powerful piercing bullet that can destroy two enemies at once. The remaining gun is a shotgun, which fires shots over a wide range, so it's effective against enemies standing side by side. The five standard stages take you through a variety of horrific locations populated by an imaginative range of monsters, but shoot the hidden items and you'll be able to play some special secret courses as well.



LA MACHINE GUNS



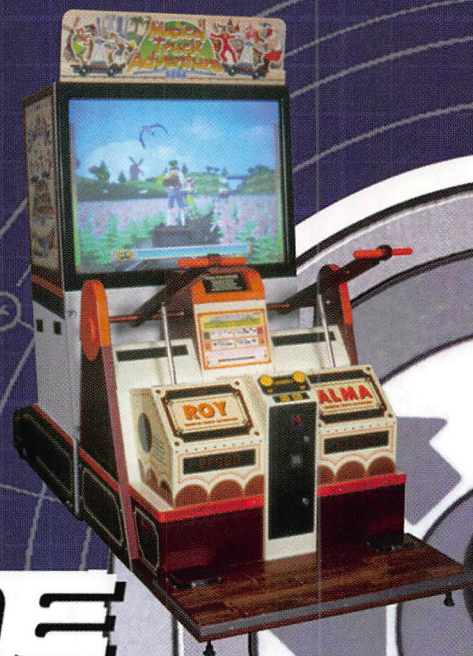
MAGICAL TRUCK ADVENTURE



POWER STONE



EVIL NIGHT



RAY CRISIS © TAITO CORP. 1998

Following on from *Ray Force* and *Ray Storm*, Taito's latest shooter goes futuristic as you penetrate the heart of a computer network to stop a program from taking over the world. As you play, a rating shows its spread across the network. As you fail to destroy enemy programs trying to eliminate you, it increases, and when it reaches 100 percent, you must fight the final boss. The game uses a name entry system so that when you replay, the game remembers how good you are and which of the random maps you've already played. The five areas include water, sky, desert and day and night city.

RACE ON © 1998 NAMCO ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Proving that you don't need to model physics in order to create a great driving experience is Namco's original party race game. Emphasizing the fun of driving, you can crash your car into walls and other cars with little serious disadvantage, but laugh as even the slightest bash sends your opponents somersaulting through the air. The cabinet's built-in camera allows you to see who's driving the car in front of you by putting that person's face above the car, and the race's progress is broadcast live with commentary from a reporter. Bumps and bangs are felt through the feedback from the steering wheel.

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GUN BIRD 2 © 1998 PSIKYO

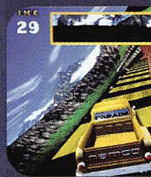
Suffering from an affliction, you are on a quest to find an omnipotent medicine that has been handed down from generation to generation since ancient times. In order to do this, you must gather three essential medicines and take them to the God of Medicine. However, a trio of evil female sky pirates are in your way! Battling across seven stages with shots, bombs and a new direct assault attack, choose from over five characters, such as a robot, witch or a vampire. A wealth of bonus items, power-ups and between-stage-demos add variety and long-lasting gameplay.

GAROU DENSETSU WILD AMBITION © 1998 SNK. (UNDER DEVELOPMENT)

This is latest SNK game to get the 3D treatment, care of the Hyper NEO GEO 64. After a series of 2D hits, Terry, Andy, Mai and Joe are all back with another four favorites and two new characters (Tsumumi Sendou, a female Japanese wrestler, and Touji Sakata, the former teacher of Geese). The main features of the game remain faithful to the original, but new features, such as being able to move in and out of the screen and the changing viewpoints, which haven't been possible up to now, take full advantage of the powerful hardware.



GUN BIRD 2



RACE ON



GAROU DENSETSU WILD AMBITION



RAY CRISIS

world republic

DREAMCAST EXCLUSIVE!!

[i] Japanese RPGs are destined to play an integral role in the Dreamcast's success over the course of its first year. Explosive action and adventure titles such as *Sonic* and *Blue Stinger* maintain the DC's hype juggernaut, but Japanese gamers tend to measure the worth of a system by the depth of the software at hand. And classically, RPGs are the definition of deep. So while we wait for the incredible *Grandia* sequel, looming far off into the DC's future (at least a year away), and as we drool before the majesty of *Climax Landers*, set for a midsummer release, Sting have provided us with *Evolution*, the Dreamcast's first true RPG. We recently had the opportunity to speak with Team Evolution regarding the creation of a first-generation 128-bit RPG...

World Republic Interview • developer/publisher **Sting** • available in japan **now**

team evolution



GR: When did you first begin to work on *Evolution*?

TE: The original *Evolution* was planned about two or three years ago. It was set to be an RPG for the Sega Saturn. In the end, the settings and the game system were much different from the *Evolution* we've finally developed. However, since we got DC development systems later and the time was just right, we decided to develop the RPG for DC.

GR: Is everyone on the team a big fan of adventure/RPG games?

TE: We each have our own unique taste, but yes, most of us play RPGs often.

GR: During the course of the project, what DC development systems were you working with?

TE: Hmm...we really can't tell you anything about that yet!

GR: Are there any particular advantages you've experienced on the DC, compared to development on other systems?

TE: The ability to convey expression in 3D is much, much higher than others. With *Evolution*, we can express characters with loads of polygons, but if we used other console systems, we wouldn't even be able to realize Mag, the hero. The main disadvantage that we experienced is that the developers can't draw forth 100 percent of what the DC has to offer yet.

GR: Tell us about the concept behind *Evolution*'s theme/premise.

TE: Basically, even when there are adversities to endure, never back down and always think positive.

GR: Do you think Dreamcast players are ready for multi-faceted features in RPGs after the number of linear RPGs on 32-bit systems?

TE: We believe that everything's possible with such a high-capability system. We feel that the networking functions, especially, will open up new possibilities for players.



Not only are the high resolution visuals stunning, but take special note of the expression on Mag's face. This ability shows off not only the Dreamcast's polygonal horsepower but the design skills of Sting as well. It's also worth noting that the vibrant towns are viewed from a detailed 3/4 perspective.

GR: Why did you choose an anime-type look for the *Evolution* characters and environments instead of a more realistic approach?

TE: Everyone goes for realistic 3D graphics now. With *Evolution*, we want to show that it is possible to create unique and cute anime-type characters. However, we also demonstrate the technique of high-quality textures, even though it is in the anime style.

GR: Are the characters based on any real-life actors or personalities?

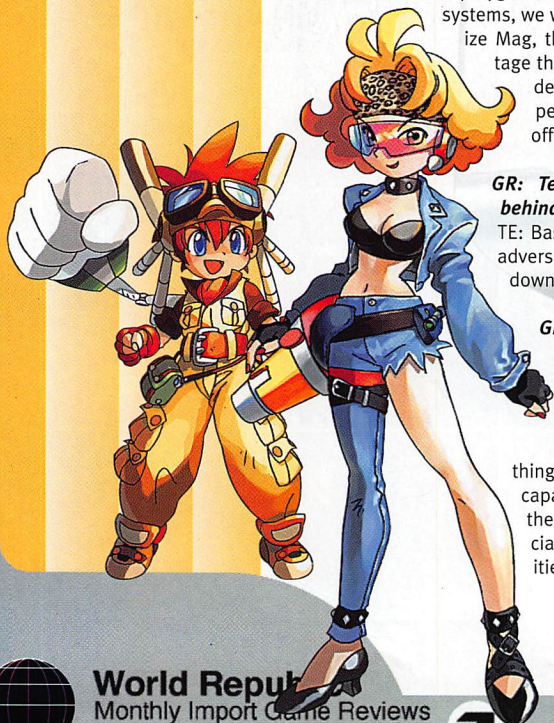
TE: We started the character designs after deciding on the personalities and roles of each character. Actually, we based them on some facets of people around us, but almost everything is basically original.

GR: Tell us about the sort of activities offered inside *Evolution*'s towns.

TE: We've set up interesting conversations with town people, buying and selling items and equipment at specialty shops, strengthening Psyflames at Remodel shops, and exchanging information with fellow adventurers at the Society reception. Also, you can identify and process unusual items found in dungeons.

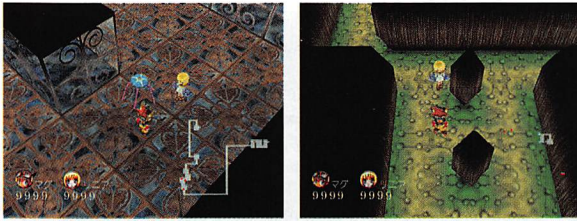
GR: Will there be multiple towns or just the main town near the ruins?

TE: Several countries and towns are part of the story, but only one town, named Pannamn, actively appears in the game. Mag's house is here, acting as his base of operation.



GR: Why did you decide to go with randomly created dungeons?

TE: We always intended to make good use of what we started in *Baroque*.



Welcome to the dungeons. Every type of catacomb is randomly generated, ensuring a new experience each time you play. Courtesy of intelligent randomizing, you can leave the mapmaker behind and just play!

GR: What kind of enemies will be included in the dungeons?

TE: Most of them are huge insects and great beasts native to the world. There are, however, extremely powerful and bizarre boss monsters at the end of every dungeon.

GR: Are the dungeons the only location that combat takes place in?

TE: Basically, yes! Ah-ha...but there are special exceptions. You will see.

GR: Can you explain the combat in Evolution? Are you introducing all-new "systems"?

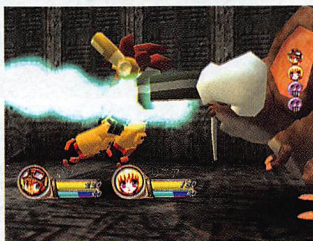
TE: Combat is a typical "choosing command" style, but you actively put your party in 3x3 squares. The action and movement order, as well as each parameter, changes depending on the position of the characters, so you'll have to consider strategies in battle.

GR: Are there puzzles to solve in the dungeons?

TE: There are no puzzles, because recovering items and combat are the main focus.

GR: Does Evolution have a CD soundtrack or are you using the DC's chip for both music and effects?

TE: CRI ADX, the streaming compression technique, is being used. It has been implemented since our work on the Saturn. It has the equivalent quality of a CD soundtrack for music and effects.



These are some examples of the combat system in Evolution. Gamers familiar with such titles as *Final Fantasy* and *Wild Arms* will find it easy to jump right into combat. Notice the gorgeous graphics here; the animations are even better! In addition, through a cleverly implemented grid system, traditional menu combat will finally meet strategy head-on!

GR: What sort of VMS extras will be included in Evolution?

TE: It is only for saving data, not for extras. However, the name of a party and statistical information are indicated on the VMS screen.

GR: About how many hours of gameplay does Evolution offer?

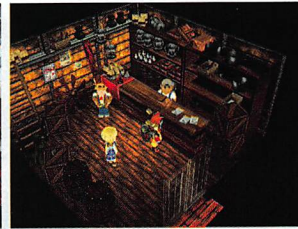
TE: Approximately 20 hours.

GR: Are there any DC game types that you are especially looking forward to?

TE: Games which use the network function. Not like games on the PC. It has to be DC originals.

GR: What do you think of the DC shortages? Do you think Sega can overcome this setback? Also, in general, do you think that Sega is handling the DC introduction well in Japan?

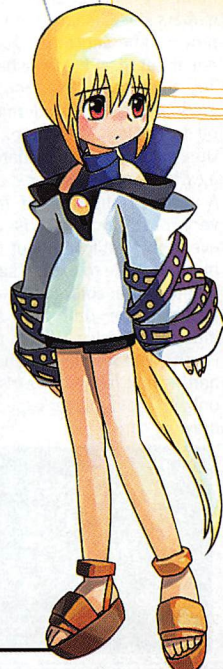
TE: You heard the news about DC shortages! And even software for the DC is still low in number. Maybe we'll see a better result after the Christmas holidays when they get enough games and DC systems out. Their promotion of DC was pretty good, though. Yukawa-senmu, the DC spokesman, became a big celebrity in Japan.



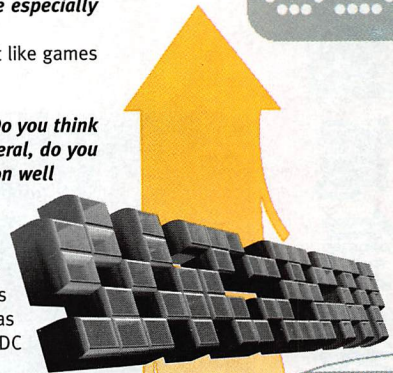
Examples of Evolution's indoor areas. Observe the awesome textures, lighting, and next-generation models. RPGs will explode on Dreamcast!

GR: You have only just completed Evolution, but do you know what type of game Sting would like to do next? Would you like to offer some kind of internet gameplay?

TE: We have a serious plan, but we can't say anything solid yet. However, our staff is becoming very skilled in the use of 3D graphics, and we want to dramatically improve our visuals in the future.



As you can tell, Sting seem poised to make an aggressive comeback, and *Evolution* is just the first step. Their cool character designs and adventuresome storylines have been consistently improving over time, and the team's collective devotion and passion for projects has never been in question. We thank Sting for their time and wish them the best of luck in the future. [f] The *Evolution* review and part two of the interview is next issue, so stay posted.



Los Angeles
ロサンゼルス

Tokyo
東京



World Republic Review • developer/publisher konami • available in japan now

ganbare goemon



The sequel to one of '98's best action-RPGs has arrived... in Japan

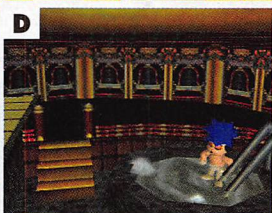
Somewhere in the forest, a short distance from Hagure Town, Goemon and Ebisumaru arrive at the strange Ninja Mansion. They've been summoned by the wise master Monoshiri. On the promise of seeing something most spectacular, the pair has come forth. Much to their amazement, Monoshiri reveals to them a fantastic machine capable of raising the dead! While Goemon is busy conjuring memories of relatives he'd like to revive, Ebisumaru decides to push one of the machine's levers. You remember Ebisumaru, don't you? He's the chubby, jovial-looking prancing ninja with caked-on makeup. As the mystical machine disappears into the darkness, a voice beckons. The sister of the demon they abolished, Bisumaru, has been awakened! Snatching

the machine, she announces her plan to resurrect the prince of darkness himself, and marry him so that they may turn the world into a token of their sick love. Now that's a *Goemon* story! Can Goemon and his friends beat down evil yet again? Will Satan redecorate Japan? Will Goemon ever get a new hairdo? These questions and more will be answered in the best game not planned for U.S. consumption in the foreseeable future: *Ganbare Goemon*, with a subtitle too hard to translate into English! Fans of *Mystical Ninja* can both celebrate and be depressed at the same time, because while the good news is that this game is every bit as good as its predecessor, the bad news is that it most likely will not be beaching in the U.S. Bah! Not to worry, though: it's heavily action/platform based, with the familiar *Goemon* villages occupying the in-between scenarios. If you've ever played a *Goemon* game, you should have no problem buying goods and solving simple riddles to open up the map. GG2 incorporates all of the best elements

from last year's 3D game and turns them sideways for a 2D polygonal platformer of epic proportions. You'll scale huge pagodas, battle ancient demons, experience a plethora of superbly produced platform elements, and, of course, hum joyfully to another superb soundtrack from Konami's master

development team at KCEO. On par in every way with last year's offering, the textures and detail of the polygonal structures and characters alike are fastidiously detailed, the effects and pyrotechnics are second to none, and the gameplay is diverse and loaded with surprises. I don't know how they do it, but the Osaka team manages to get a ton of detailed polys onscreen and maintain a respectable frame rate, busting out N64 capabilities rarely seen. How I wish that this team would have done *Castlevania*! GG2 looks markedly better than anything Konami have offered on the N64 by a wide margin. It's a shame they put their best teams on games destined to bomb in Japan, where the N64 is all but history, when the U.S. N64 market is bustling.

Regardless, if you're looking for a long, involved, graphically superb N64 side scroller with an emphasis on old-school gameplay, look no further. It's all good! ⚡



(A) The Osaka team go all out. Every facet of the game is impeccably detailed. (B) The 2.5D towns are gorgeous. (C) At night the enemies take on a darker, more sinister look. During the day they're much tamer. (D) As with all *Goemon* games the more you spend at the Inn, the better the room!

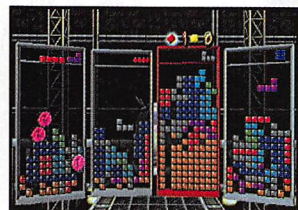
Dreamcast Review

WORLD RXP 0010108 450762 00172

tetris 4d

GAME BY Bullet-Proof Software

A testament to the exceptional strength of basic game design, an addiction that has crawled inside the minds of more than 40 million gamers since its inception, *Tetris* has proven time and time again that it's not about to let its name be forgotten any time soon. It's 1999, we have graduated to the wonderment of 128-bit technology, and here, on Sega's Dreamcast, the game shares company with games like *Sonic* and *VF3tb*. A perfect translation of *Tetris* in its very base form, *Tetris 4D* mines everything we love about the classic but does little to exploit such powerful hardware: colors are bland, backgrounds are dull and simplistic, music is abrasive, effects are nonexistent. With nothing to show for the hardware it inhabits, *Tetris 4D* offers only its cool 4-player experience as a drawing card. ✨ C+



World Republic says "Ah, so good to see my old friends again. As usual, I'll have a hard time figuring out what they want me to do (it's in Japanese), but I'll love every second!" A-

ganbare goemon © konami 1998. tetris 4d © bullet-proof soft. 1998.



World Republic Review • developer/publisher Dream Factory/Square • available in Japan now

ehргеiz



This isn't the pinnacle of 3D fighting but it offers one of the best packages in the genre

Ever since I played the original *Tobal*, I knew that Dream Factory had serious skills in the realm of 3D polygonal construction. Sure, *Tobal* was flat and gouraud shaded (almost entirely devoid of textures), but it was an early PS game running at 60 fps with deep 3D backgrounds and stunning music. I was into it in a big way. When the fully textured *Tobal 2* followed, running in super high-res at 60 fps (minus full 3D background elements – oh well!) and gifted with stunning analog-supported full 3D gameplay, I was in love. Dream Factory could really smoke the machine. I immediately sought out *Ehrgeiz* in arcades, reeled in by the potential of DF programming on arcade hardware and the inclusion of playable *Final Fantasy* characters, and serious quarter dispensing ensued. Now I'm playing Dream Factory's home version, ready to keep the faith.

Up front, I'll tell you that *Ehrgeiz*'s gameplay is a love or hate thang. The regular one-on-one battle incorporates a completely free-roaming engine that might be perceived as sloppy on the ol' PS. Reason: The button configuration on a pad can't touch the arcade's built-for-speed layout, but it makes a valiant attempt with Dual Shock stick control enabled. Either way, the game-

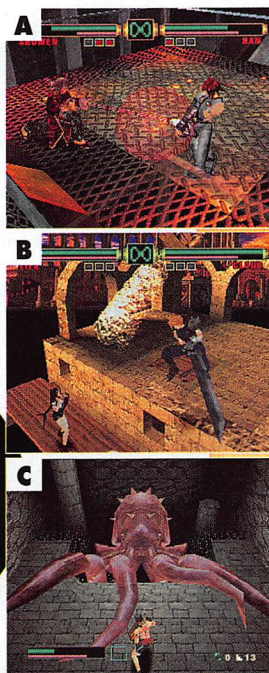
play is mostly intact. Launching into Cloud's sword blitzkrieg is as satisfying as ever, while Prince Naseem's violent fisticuffs feel as brutal as expected. The 3D engine is extremely crisp in high-res at 60 fps without a z-buffering woe to be seen, but unfortunately the characters have lost detail in the translation and it kind of hurts the presentation. On the other hand, the PS version has glorious Sephiroth and Django super fighting action, so I'm compelled to embrace the characters, their reduced polygons, and their pixels. Oh, and the CG intro is absolutely gorgeous.

Although not quite as cool as I had hoped, *Ehrgeiz*'s mini-games do offer up an appreciable distraction to the main fighting mode. Highlighted by the silly Battle Panel and chaotic Battle Runner (which has you and a friend running laps while pummeling each other), the mini-games are cool but strictly mini. Only the "Brand New Quest,"

Godless the Dungeon, offers substantial (however limited) gameplay with acceptable depth. Ultimately, *Tobal* fans may be the only strong audience for *Ehrgeiz*, as serious 3D fighting fans may be turned off by the flowing, floaty nature of its go-anywhere gameplay. Since this brand of gameplay is *Ehrgeiz*'s bare-faced novelty, it may be lost on many people. Also, *Tobal 2* still plays much, much better than *Ehrgeiz*, and its mini-quest mode is mostly superior. Mmm...perhaps Squaresoft may have been a little too involved with the process, robbing Dream Factory of prowess, seeing as how their big-money characters are part of the package.

World Republic says "Although not as immediately accessible as others in the 3D fighting genre, *Ehrgeiz* is a beautiful, replayable game you should explore." **B**

(A) Ouch! Skewered in the jewels by a long pole! The contact effect isn't quite true to the arcade. (B) Cloud mercilessly bombards Tifa with a graphically impressive meteor attack. Playing the FF characters in a 3D fighter is a great feeling. (C) The first major obstacle in *Ehrgeiz*'s *Godless the Dungeon* mini-game is this ugly octopus.



Dreamcast Review

WORLD RXP 0010.051 648492 002.43

seventh cross

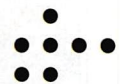
GAME BY NEC Home Electronics

I think it's way too easy to place a heavy emphasis on the visuals of first generation DC titles. We tend to forget the other prolific benefits of the hardware: memory and processing power. These two important elements will encourage developers to create games with unprecedented depth. Witness NEC Home Electronics' *Seventh Cross*, an intriguing journey into the evolution of life. You begin your genetic ascension on a simple 10x10 grid. By drawing a basic bitmap-style image (sort of like the logo makers in racing games, etc.), you determine the initial DNA formula of your creature. Color will also change certain vital characteristics of your lifeform. In this way, your creature is pretty much guaranteed to be unique. After this, the arduous quest of evolution begins as your single-cell organism floats within the tides of a desolate Earth-like environment. It's incredibly involving; the environment is massive. Exploration is genuinely fun, as your lifeform develops through time by consuming all other inferior creatures along the way. The pace is slow, let it be known, but the satisfaction of raising your creature to the status of (perhaps) a magical bipedal powerhouse is exhilarating to say the least. The graphics are typically first-generation 3dfx quality, but the landscapes are vast and certain effects are very nice. But that's not really important. In *Seventh Cross*, you've been given life. Now you must leave proof on this barren world of your existence.



World Republic Review • developer/publisher **Capcom** • available in japan **now**

street fighter zero 3

There will be a time when *Street Fighter* ends. But this is not that time.

In many ways *Street Fighter Zero 3* is a perfectly typical *Street Fighter* game, and in some ways it is wonderfully new. The stalwart *Street Fighter* gameplay has basically been recycled once again, with a few changes and improvements vying to guard against a stale climate. But despite the certain familiarity, the fighting style, incomparable in its fluidity and natural focus, is as solid as ever, skillfully mining the arcade version to its very core.

If you are like me, you applaud the fact that *Street Fighter* will never jump outside its comfortable gameplay boundaries; if it did, the game would no longer be *Street Fighter*. As this latest game in a string of *Street Fighters* shows, it is in the maturing visuals that the game's depth and appeal are multiplied. When I play games like this, I am reminded of why 2D artwork, when accomplished with the mastery expressed in every single screen in *Zero 3*, lends a game a quality that currently eludes polygonal environments: the backdrops are gorgeous, awash in vibrant color and exquisite artwork, the loading screens, animations and overall design a rare treat. Big and bold, the characters are equally impressive, underscored by superb animation that rises a step above previous *SF* efforts (in order to conserve memory and assure that the PlayStation was tapped to its limit, the contact flashes given off in battle use polygonal effects). Considering the beautiful backdrops these equally impressive characters are set against, we couldn't ask for a better arcade conversion.

Through this parade of exquisite art and design marches a more-than-generous assortment of gameplay enhancements to the *Zero* series. The most significant changes come in the form of the X-ism, V-ism, and Z-ism modes, which alter the use of certain moves and techniques; a guard meter, which, when depleted, hinders blocking; a slight altering of character moves and a change in alpha counter; and the inclusion of the involving World Tour, a tournament waged across more than 19 locations, where skill points are gained to imbue character strengths. And in what is my favorite addition to *Zero 3*, every character that has appeared in a *Street Fighter* game, along with five awesome new fighters, is selectable. With impressive new fighters, Cody from *Final Fight* origin and the sleek, graceful Juli, teamed with missed greats like Fei Long and Blanka, *Zero 3* is worth playing for the bevy of combatants alone. But beyond the tradition, beyond the grand style and presentation,

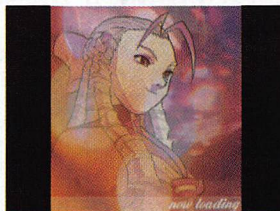
to play *Zero 3* is to experience fighting of consummate movement and time, the choreography of beautifully drawn characters flowing through 2D space – a completeness that cannot be found in any other home fighting game. ✧

Playstation Preview

atelier ellie

GAME BY GUST

Atelier Ellie, an alchemist simulation RPG in which you learn how to create potions and medicines, is the sequel to *Atelier Marie*, offering different characters, more items and new adventures. Gust have chosen a new artist for the game, whose talents really change its rich atmosphere. In addition, there are a variety of new game features in which you can now earn money to buy equipment and fight more monsters when searching for herbal ingredients with which to blend your own potions. All the beautifully designed characters are great to interact with, but you need decent Japanese to progress.



World Republic says: "An arcade conversion as close as you could ask for on PS. The handful of added characters and World Tour make it an even stronger experience" ★

atelier ellie © 1998 gust, ltd. street fighter zero 3 © capcom 1998.



World Republic Review • developer/publisher **bandai** • available in japan now

mobile suit gundam



Gundam fighting goes 3D in this deep-space take off of Virtual On.

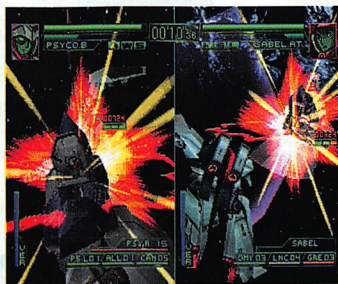


Bandai's come through and actually delivered a decent *Gundam* game. *Mobile Suit Gundam: Char's Counter Attack* features vaguely *Virtual On*-ish, anime-like battles in deep space starring a good selection of mechs culled from the huge *Gundam* series. The classic RX-78 type Gundam is represented, as is the newer RX-93 V-type, facing off against Char's Zaku and Gelgoog, along with Gyunei Gus' Jagd Doga.

The first thing that strikes you about *Char's Counter Attack* is the production quality, as you are greeted with a very good-looking intro combining CG and nicely shaded animation cels. This goodwill continues into the solid gameplay, which consists of straight-forward fighting, with each character wielding a healthy selection of long and short-range weapons. You can swing swords, fire bazookas, and even launch dummies of your mech to fool the opponents' lock-on weapons. You can also lose the limbs of your mech, rendering certain weapons useless.

Through story or battle mode, the action remains fast and playable. It's an easy and short game, but the two-player split-screen battle option is welcome. However, it's not really a full enough gameplay experience to recommend to someone who doesn't care about the *Gundam* characters. ✱

World Republic says "With its solid graphics and cool cut scenes, this is an above average *Gundam* fighter." B-

World Republic Review • developer/publisher **Sunsoft** • available in japan now

hard edge

Sunsoft attempt to recreate *Biohazard's* brand of moody rendered action...with disappointing results.

This game is budget. A lot more effort (cash and time) could have been put into the experience. *Hard Edge* is sloppy from the get go and it's too easy to spot its many inadequacies.

To begin with, *Hard Edge* has terrible CG and really lame English voice over (*Biohazard*-style, only much worse). The animation of the CG characters is stiff and unrealistic, while the voices, whether intentionally cheesy or not, are sub-B-movie quality and thoroughly annoying. It could have been funny to hear the surfer bartender's strangely scripted, "Yeah man, thanks man," if it were read in an overtly campy manner, but instead he sounds like a serious moron. These are only superficial problems in the face of a greater issue: woefully average gameplay. *Hard Edge* has boring level design and puzzles, and that's what prevents it from approaching greatness.

Some of the characters' battle moves and controls are very cool, but I can't forgive the lackluster design. ✱



World Republic says "Sunsoft seriously need a hit game, and they put major marketing gusto into *Hard Edge*. It only the playtesting and design received similar treatment." C

Playstation Preview

story of the insect battles

GAME BY JALECO

Raise and battle your insects through a 40-stage Story Mode or use your Pocket Station for a 5-on-5 insect battle with your friends, which lets you view all your insects and analyze their data. The RPG mode is the standard overhead view where you can go places, meet other people and do various things, such as buy new equipment at the pet shop. However, it's in the 3D battle stages that things really heat up. I never knew that beetles had power shields and beam attacks, but I'm really glad they do, because it makes for one awesome pyrotechnic fight.

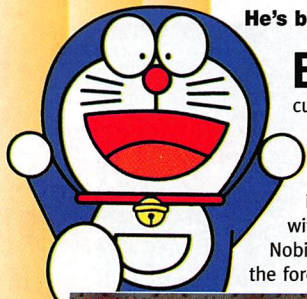
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World Republic Review • developer/publisher epoch • available in japan now

doraemon 2



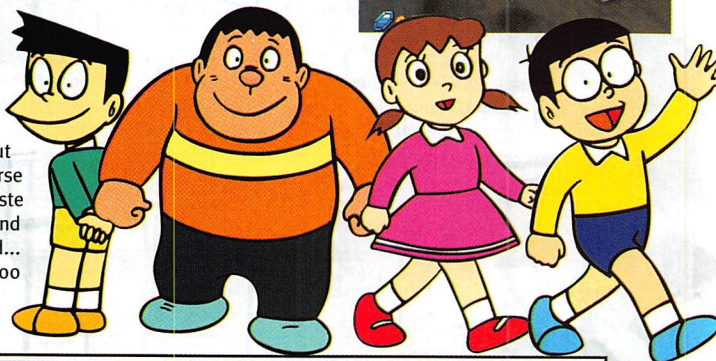
He's blue. He's cute. He's Robotic and his friend is called Nobita!



Everybody's favorite Japanese robotic cat is back in his second outing on the Nintendo 64, and thank goodness for that, because this guy is the cutest little bloke we have ever seen! Doraemon and his young friends are on another mystical journey together and have to solve many puzzles (simple ones at that) and explore many dungeons in order to reach the Shrine of Light and return home. The action takes place in a 3D environment (much improved over the first *Doraemon* game) and begins with Nobita (the kid with the glasses) starting his adventure all alone in a maze-like forest. First, Nobita must find his other chums, Shizuka, Suneo and Gian, who are all lost in the forest, before he can rescue Doraemon. Once you have assembled the party and solved some easy puzzles, you can begin to explore the dungeons, collecting items and treasures that help you ultimately find your way to the Shrine of Light. There are, of course, some bad guys named Mina and Pyun who want you to fail your missions, so be careful!

Doraemon 2 features a cool little Happiness System, in which the characters' facial expressions can change depending on how they feel you are progressing with the game. While obviously a game designed for a much younger audience, *Doraemon 2* offers a cute, enjoyable romp with simple environments, basic controls, and easy puzzle elements, and the fact

that the Japanese text does not hinder gameplay at all makes it a good choice for first-time importers trying their luck with a Japanese game. It won't take long to finish, and may not be the most advanced game on the N64, but there are certainly worse games out there to waste your money on. Try it, and you may be surprised... just don't expect too much.



World Republic says "Bah! I wish I could read all this text, etc... No, seriously, this title is very simple to play and understand and therefore is a good laugh. It won't last that long, though."

World Republic Review • developer/publisher rage/imagineer • available in japan now

incoming



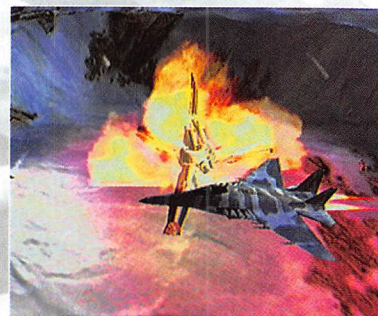
Pretty explosions almost make up for the simplicity...

In the excitement surrounding a new system launch, a game need only be decent to capture the attention of gamers. Such is the case with Rage's *Incoming*, a simple, straightforward action title that benefits hugely from the glow of new hardware.

A fairly direct port of the PC game of the same name, *Incoming* serves up mission after mission of shooting action wherein you get to pilot all manner of vehicles from tanks and helicopters and even man stationary turrets. Regardless of your mission objectives, whether they entail protecting a cargo plane or delivering equipment, you're basically just shooting targets nonstop. In this respect, *Incoming* is mostly successful, as the shooting action is fast and mostly fun, and with the added

bonus of Dreamcast's 3D power, a visual treat. The explosions are vibrant and colorful and weapons cast convincing lighting effects all over the terrain and surrounding objects. However, with the fog and occasional slowdown, it's clear that the hardware is hardly being pushed.

As the quality and quantity of Dreamcast titles inevitably improves, it will be more and more difficult for titles like *Incoming* to make an impact. For the time being, though, the novelty of its high-spec graphics is enough to warrant a look. The gameplay is simple empty fun, and nothing more than that.



World Republic says "Not bad as a first-generation third-party title, though the simple gameplay will probably leave you wanting more. The helicopter needs a strafing!"

doraemon © bandai 1998. incoming © rage software 1998.



World Republic
Monthly Import Game Reviews
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SORCERER HUNTERS

VOLUME 1

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1997 (JP)

90 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE/COMEDY

Story: The Sorcerer Hunters are a band of anti-wizard warriors dispatched by Big Momma (she's not what the name implies), who channels her decrees through a cute little fairy, Dota. If you've got a mystical infestation, they're the ones you're gonna call. In the first episode, "Float-Bridge of Love," things get underway when virgins begin mysteriously disappearing from a small village. It turns out they are being fed to Gamaru, a hideous monster who thrives on the anger and pain of human offerings. If this thing grows up, well, big problems will occur. Of course, the Sorcerer Hunters kick its ass, and its breeders too. Episode 2, "The Red Flower of Life," deals with the Red Flowers of Mesopotamia, which attach their seeds to living souls and suck the life force from their bodies (hey, just like the IRS!). They then grow into shadow souls (shallow, soulless humans) that cultivate more seeds. Problem. As part of the forbidden magic, they just gotta go. Standing in the Sorcerer Hunters' way, however, is Madame Amore'. She's using the flowers in an attempt to create the perfect male. And finally, in the 3rd and best episode, "The Unwritten Laws of Light and Dark," Carrot, the young,

oversexed member of the team, falls into a hideous trap when he's tricked by love. When the

throes of passion become a possible death sentence, the Sorcerer Hunters spring into action. Carrot absorbs some evil vibes and the animal in him takes over.

Character design: Big Momma looks like a goddess straight out of the classic *Valis* series of video games. In fact, there are a lot of *Valis*-looking influences in *Sorcerer Hunters*, and that's a good thing. Overall the character design is excellent.

Animation: Especially fluid in certain areas, like the overture and beginning of episode three. Otherwise, good throughout.

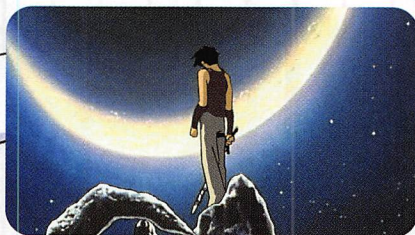
Dubbing: Very good. All of the characters' voices fit their onscreen personas, and they are a diverse mix.

Soundtrack: A catchy, finely arranged sitcom-like ensemble that goes nicely with the theme of each episode.

Fight Scenes: Not all that fluid in terms of animation, but there are a lot of interesting bouts, which usually include tongue-in-cheek humor or mystical elements.

Highlight: The series relies heavily and to great effect on the banter between the Sorcerer Hunters themselves.

Final Analysis: Another quality series from ADV Films. While not on par with the likes of *Slayer* or *Burn-Up W*, it's a good ensemble piece, with plenty of humor, sexual overtones, and mysticism to draw in a wide range of fans.



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LEGEND OF CRYSTANIA

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1996 MIZUNO RYO/GROUP SNE
60 MINUTES (EACH) • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

★★★★ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: Scripted by the great Ryo Mizuno of *Lodoss War* fame, these two episodes of *Legend of Crystania* are totally enthralling from start to finish. The first episode (following the excellent LOC feature film), "The Cave of the Sealed," chronicles the now-separated band of heroes and their quest to finally abolish the evil plaguing beautiful Crystania. The most compelling of these personal quests, Redon's search for Priestess Aderishia is gracefully enhanced by the big man's adorable little companions. In "Resurrection of the God's King," Crystania is thrust into war and chaos as the banished king Barbas manipulates his sinister cronies into locating (and ringing) the Bell of Awakening. It's a riveting fantasy plotline that does the movie justice.

Animation: Quality stuff is on display in both videos. Generally well-animated incidental adventuring and some juicy battle action is at your disposal. Great expression.

Dubbing: While the level of talent is not altogether cohesive throughout, several characters are excellent. ADV should enlist some of the animation voice talents over at the WB (seriously).

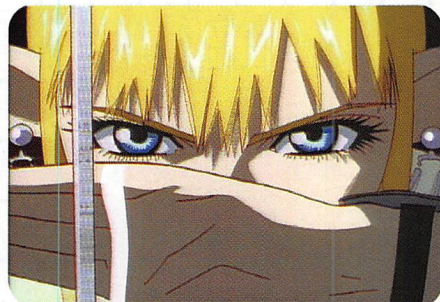
Character Design: Yoshinori Takaraya creates fantastic characters. The freaky white-haired twins, Ashram himself, the heroes – all are brilliant, totally attractive personalities.

Soundtrack: Mood-setting fantasy bliss.

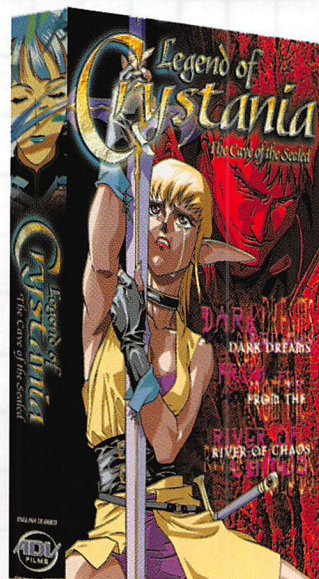
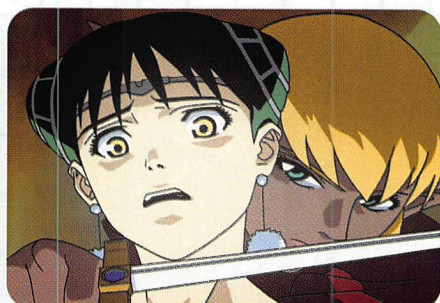
Fight Scenes: While the first episode is fairly story driven, the second raises the excitement level with a brutally bloody duel at the base of the Bell of Wakening.

Highlight: The hero's mission to locate Priestess Aderishia throws an intriguing plot twist into the mix.

Final Analysis: Before witnessing these two-hour-long fantasy-themed journeys, you should definitely enjoy the full length *Crystania* movie. It's been an epic tale.



From the creator of *Lodoss War* comes another fantasy epic, set on the Beast Island of Crystania. This is indicative of a strong, creative spirit – one who refuses to end the story of his characters and their quest of a lifetime.



ANIME • REPUBLIC

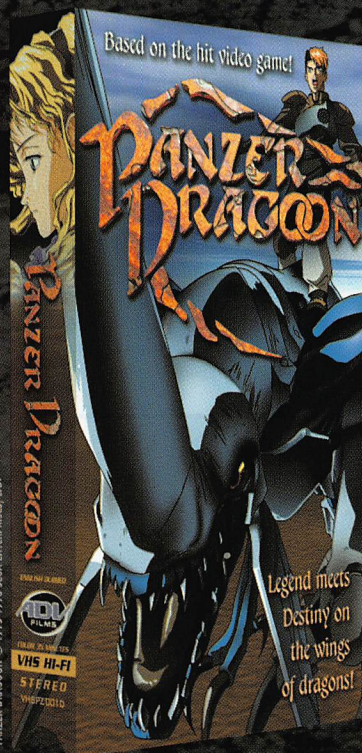


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CUTEY HONEY 3

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1994 TOEI VIDEO CO. (JP)
60 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE



Story: Cutey Honey is back for more shape-changing, big-jellied action in the 3rd volume of the new series. Honey, Grandpa Danbei and the rest of the team face even more insane bad guys who try to nuke the entire city as well as drag all the inhabitants of the city into an alternate dimension ruled by mannequin samurai and ninjas! Honey has an all new lineup of personas, and this volume is a treat for *Cutey Honey* fans.

Animation: Same as the previous volumes of the new series. Generally good quality animation, but nothing spectacular.

Dubbing: Some of the voices are pretty average, and even a little annoying, but Honey's voice remains cute enough for us guys!

Character Design: Honey is a babe, as per usual, and the cyborg ninja Grandpa is just the coolest guy ever!

Soundtrack: Pretty standard musical score and incidental tunes.

Fight Scenes: The fight scenes are, of course, way over the top, but that is what makes *Cutey Honey* so much fun.

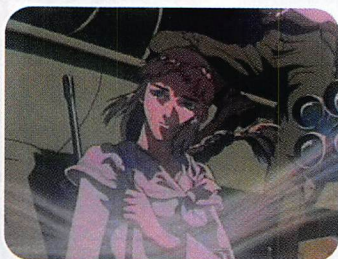
Highlight:

All the female characters have enormous jellies that bounce around and get exposed at every available opportunity. That has to be the highlight!

Final Analysis: The new *Cutey Honey* series is really simple, enjoyable anime. Suited to those viewers who enjoy more puerile humor, vol. 3 is 60 minutes of your life that will be well spent indeed.



CUTEY HONEY



Story: It's an overwhelmingly dark tale of future Tokyo, a place and time where the Persona Century Corporation owns 99 percent of the world and clings to the concept of absolute domination. Amidst the madness of such power, a lawless sector of Tokyo called Kabuki Town sends a mystical rebel and his band of misfits into the corporation's depths to end its reign.

Animation: *DB* is slow for the most part, but it has very active animated action. Some of the insane violence shuffles along brilliantly.

Dubbing: Umm...no. This anime hasn't been dubbed, it's been clubbed. I hear more captivating voices in my head at the end of the issue.

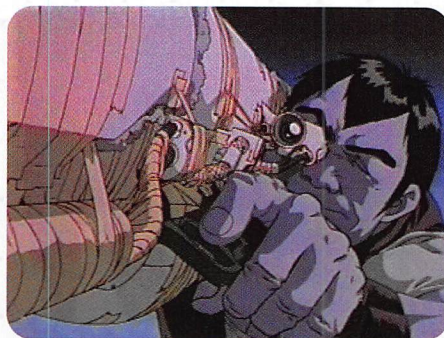
Character Design: The dated look doesn't help matters. I suppose the super-assassins are cool, but the good guys (including 95 percent of the rebels) aren't memorable. Chris the Knife is awesome!

Soundtrack: Passable accompaniment; however, it's mostly depressingly slow, jazzy stuff.

Fight Scenes: As I said, some of the clashes are serious. Wicked bone crunching and cranium splitting "enhanced human" power.

Highlight: Some of the quiet moments within the corporation, courtesy of the flush-worthy dubbing, are humorous beyond belief. Malevolence has never sounded so crap.

Final Analysis: You might enjoy the atmospheric futuristic gothic mayhem. Poor dub though.



DARKSIDE BLUES

•1998 U.S. Manga • 1994 AKITA SHOTEN • TOHO (JP)
83 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

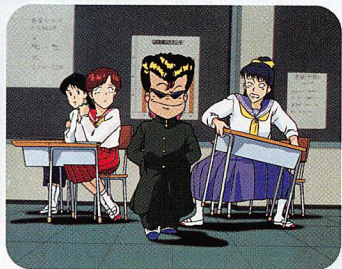
☆☆☆ GOTHIC ACTION/ADVENTURE

DARKSIDE BLUES

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AR



BITE ME! CHAMELEON

•1998 ADV FILMS (USA) • 1996 KODANSHA/ATSUSHI KASE/JVC
60 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED



COMEDY

Story: It's Yazawa's (A-Chan!) first day in high school, and the little bugger is ready to climb through the ranks of geeks and misfits to become their new leader. Unfortunately, when his day begins, he's mistaken for a urinal (by two classmates), he says all the wrong things to Hikaru, his new love, and he makes an enemy out of the school's most dangerous thug. He's deranged and perverted but quite resourceful, and so the wacky story unfolds.

Character Design: These are strictly average high school hijinks, and the characters aren't memorable in the least. A-Chan has a few funny expressions and his obsessed transvestite "lover" is a maniac.

Animation: Not especially powerful animation on display here. Other comedy series, such as *Ping Pong Club*, are given much better treatment. Some expressions are great, but it's all very simple.

Dubbing: N/A. The subtitled translation comes across well, though, with all the proper Americanized curses thrown in for good measure.

Soundtrack: It's the typical jazzy pop that most of these high school comedies have. There's one sad moment, though, at a rock show.

Fight Scenes: The last encounter, A-Chan versus the bike gang leader is great. He gets pummeled by a 9-iron!

Highlight: There are some truly disgusting moments, such as Yazawa's horrible Tampon fiasco!

Final Analysis: Nowhere near as good as *Ping Pong Club*. Not in terms of comedy, writing, or terribly disturbing visuals.



BITE ME!



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SUPER-HYPER ACTION

life.

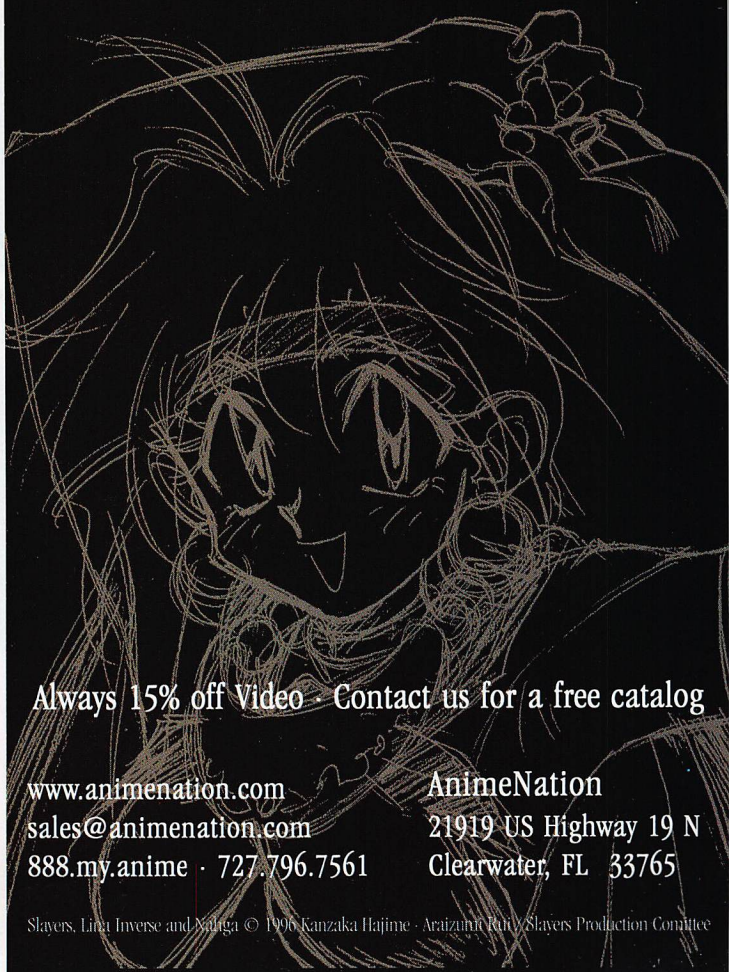
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1. Ninja Resurrection ADV
2. Escaflowne animevillage.com
3. Gundam 0083 av.com
4. Saber Marionette J av.com
5. Slayers: Explosion Array ADV

B. Williams

1. Ninja Resurrection ADV
2. Cutey Honey Vol. 3 ADV
3. Ninja Scroll Manga
4. Daimajin ADV
5. Plastic Little ADV

M. Griffin

1. Legend of Crystania ADV
2. Ninja Resurrection ADV
3. Cutey Honey Vol. 3 ADV
4. Ninja Scroll Manga
5. Darkside Blues CPM

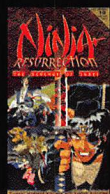


Gamers' Republic

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anime top 5

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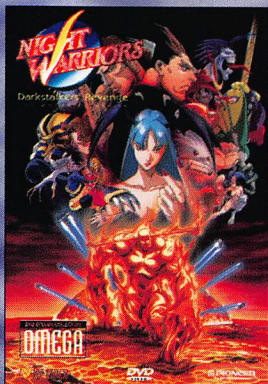
To enter the ADV/Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime Contest, simply send us a list of your favorite five anime, new or old. Make sure to include your name, address and age and send it to: Gamers' Republic Top Five Anime, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, suite 218, Westlake Village, CA 91361. First prize will receive: A Sony PlayStation & Tekken 3, A Tekken Action Figure, The Tekken Movie From ADV, and a 1-YEAR Subscription to Gamers Republic. Second place will receive The Tekken movie, a Tekken action figure, and a 1-year subscription to GR, and third place will receive the Tekken Movie and a 1-year subscription. Good Luck everyone! For your free ADV catalog (and this is one cool catalog) write to: AD Vision, 5750 Blindiff #217, Houston, TX 77036.

Gamers' Republic would like to thank ADV Films for their support.

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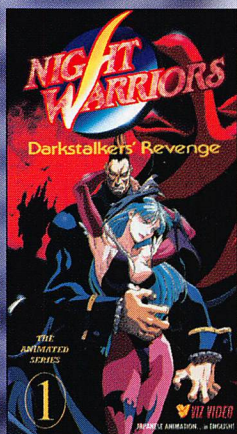
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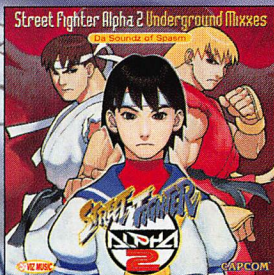
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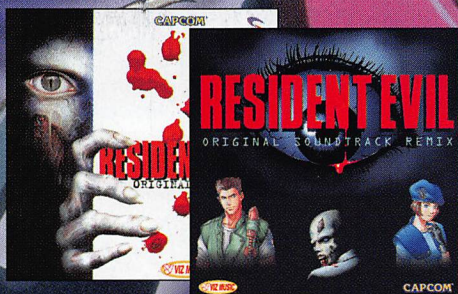
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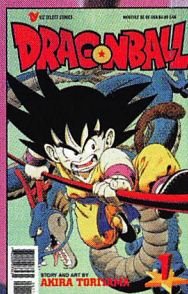
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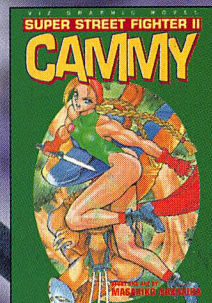
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STOMPEN...
mode

PIPSQUEAK...

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WHATSATEXTUREMAP...

HEEERESJUAN...

AHHGOO... Turns diamonds into a blue baby's face

Opponent's big head mode

Arty pen-and-ink mode

Stickman Mode

Big hands and feet

Small opponent mode

Blackout mode

Gourad shading mode

Places Juan's face on the gold
diamonds



ALL CHEATS ENABLED
Enter BOBBYBIRD

LEVEL SELECT
Enter THEEARTHMOVED

INVINCIBILITY
Enter ASSMAN

ALL WEAPONS
Enter FATKNACKER

UNLIMITED AMMUNITION
Enter FATTERKNACKER

ALL CHARACTERS IN MULTIPLAYER MODE
Enter OMGTKKYB

OFFICER BARBRADY
Enter ELVISLIVES

MR MACKEY
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PHILIP
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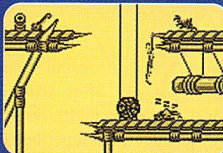


Turok 2



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LEVEL SELECT

Abe's on Game Boy is every bit as puzzle intensive as the PS version, so here are level passwords for you. How can you live with yourself?

R-Type Delta

LEVEL SELECT

Use the bombs more than 10,000 times. A stage Select option will appear once this goal has been completed (check in notes menu).

EXTRA CREDITS

Accumulate over three hours of game play to increase the number of credits to nine.

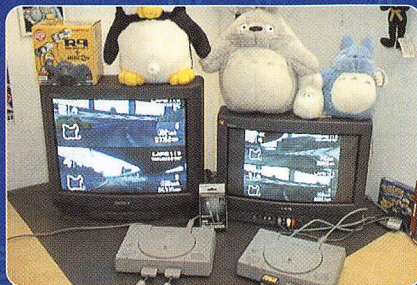
POWER ARMOR

Access the Power Armor ship by successfully completing the game under human or higher difficulty setting.

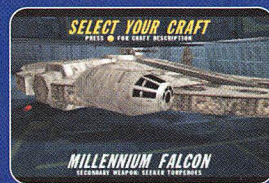
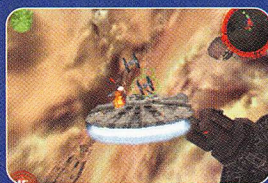
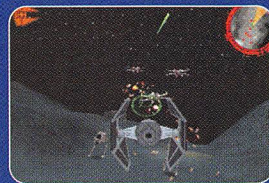
Oddworld Adventures

FOUR PLAYER LINKUP BATTLE

Contrary to what we printed last month, Namco's stunning Ridge Racer Type 4 does indeed have an undocumented link-up mode. To access this "hidden" feature, simply link two PlayStations together and select the now visible Link Battle option from the bottom of the menu. 2-4 players can now compete with insane quality!



Ridge Racer-Type 4



Rogue Squadron

NINTENDO 64



One look at the Millennium Falcon in the hangar and you just knew it was playable. Here you go...

CONTROL MILLENNIUM FALCON

Enter FARMBOY as a password and R2 will confirm correct code entry. Doesn't work on every mission, though.

UNLIMITED LIVES

Enter IGIVEUP

ALL POWER-UPS

Enter TOUGHGUY

VIEW CREDITS

Enter CREDITS

ALTERNATE RADAR DISPLAY

Enter RADAR. Altitude differences will be indicated by varying brightness levels

CONTROL AT-ST

Enter CHICKEN. Use the analog stick to move, hold Z to aim, and press B to fire

VIEW INTERMISSION SEQUENCES

Enter DIRECTOR. Then, select the Showroom option to view the intermission sequences

FLY THE TIE INTERCEPTOR

Enable the Millennium Falcon code, then enter TIEDUP as a password. Go to the ship select screen and highlight the Millennium Falcon for a few seconds. Then press the analog stick up. The camera will move around the Millennium Falcon to reveal a TIE interceptor.

Sonic Adventure's soundtrack remixed – an exciting prospect indeed. The original material is, for the most part, great Sonic Team stuff. A solid remix of these tracks, maintaining the essence of the source material (yet perhaps exploring wider soundscapes) could have been fantastic, essential stuff for gamers and music lovers alike. Or, in this case, the remixing could be an abomination...a mutation...and my vexation for this damnation knows no limitations. Oh man, this *Sonic Adventure Remix* CD was a bad idea. Almost every sequence of music over the ten painful tracks (taken from the main SA theme and each of the character's themes) is presented in harsh, industrial analog breakbeat style. This is no surprise, considering Transmutator, Razed in Black, and Sister Machine Gun had a part in many of the tracks. Imagine Senoue-san's happy, slightly sappy, but oh-so perfect "Theme of 'Miles'" being played in a crunchy analog jam session by Thrill Kill Kult, Stabbing Westward, and Nine Inch Nails...on crack. Blah. The new vocals are even worse: Knuckles' theme repeats, "The new porcupine on the block with the buff chest" over and over. How...why?! In fact, the only highlights are Mark Pistel's (of Meat Beat Manifesto) "Lazy Days" tech-trance remix, and the funky Vrenna & Blasques remix of Amy's theme. Please do not be tempted. This one is weak.

Mike Griffin

Sonic Adventure Remix
Toshiba Emi, Import

C-

I must admit, a piece of me is disappointed with *Suikoden II's* soundtrack. Despite the 105 tracks contained on these four disks, most of which are brilliantly composed by Miki Higashino (one of the composers for the first *Suikoden*), this music pales in comparison to the tunes found on the original. It's not that the composition's bad; in fact, some of the tracks found on these CDs are much more complex than anything the first *Suikoden* offered, but most fail to convey anywhere near the same amount of power. Why? To put it simply, 98 percent of the music isn't "live." Gone are the fully orchestrated tunes that made the original game so famous, replaced almost completely with PCM tracks. It's good quality, though, about the same as *FF VII's* generated music, but for anyone who's a fan of *Suikoden I*, it still comes as a shock. Judged solely by its own merits, though, *GS II* is a fabulous soundtrack. There's plenty of remixes of popular *Suikoden* tunes, and the few orchestrated tracks to be found are quite nice. Still great stuff, and if I wasn't spoiled by the first game's soundtrack, it would have gotten an A.

Ryan Lockhart

Genso Suikoden II
Original Game Soundtrack
Konami, Import

B+

Gamers' Re(public) Music Reviews

I'm normally not a fighting-game-music kind of guy, and after listening to the *Ehrgeiz* soundtrack, my opinion on these often repetitive (and quick) tunes still hasn't changed. Well, maybe a little bit. While Takayuki Nakamura (whose past credits included the *Virtua Fighter* series and *Tobal #1*) did a fine job on the "normal" music tracks for *Ehrgeiz* – which ranged from techno to rock – it wasn't this selection that gave this CD such a high score. Those who've heard of the game might also know about its *Tobal 2*-like (though vastly improved) RPG mode, "Godless the Dungeon," which had some classic music accompanying its slightly basic quest. The addition of these song selections, along with a second CD featuring all arranged tracks, makes *Ehrgeiz* one of Square's better music releases of late (well, it's certainly better than *Azure Dreams*). And for a final bonus, Nobuo Uematsu fans will be thrilled with the two tracks he composed for the game, along with his impressive remixes for these *Final Fantasy VII*-inspired tunes on the second disk.

Ryan Lockhart

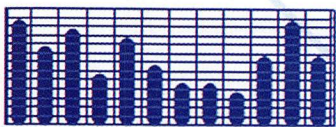
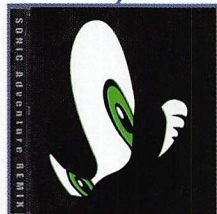
Ehrgeiz
Original Game Soundtrack
DigiCube, Import

B-

VIZ Video, one of the few U.S. companies that truly caters to the gaming and anime community (in the way so many companies do in Japan) has released yet another memorable soundtrack, adding to their already impressive stable, which includes the *Street Fighter Alpha 2 Underground Mixes* and *Resident Evil 1 & 2*. This soundtrack, lifted directly from the stunning and highly acclaimed four-volume anime series, features a somewhat diverse mix of tunes that flit somewhere between ferociously haunting rock laden with whining guitars (and a rather annoying sax) and mood-inducing dramatic ensembles that place you at the scene of many an unforgettable ghoulish scene. Standout tracks include the hauntingly serene Bluffman, Oriental Sisters – a track laced with gorgeous piano accompaniment, and the wonderfully dramatic Final Kiss, a hypnotic aria of mystic chimera. While the CD compilation doesn't evoke any singular mood, it's a blend made for road trips or just kickin' it around the house. There's even a cool Q & A with Composer Koh Atani on the inner sleeve. For details on all of VIZ' wares check 'em out online at viz.com.

Dave Halverson

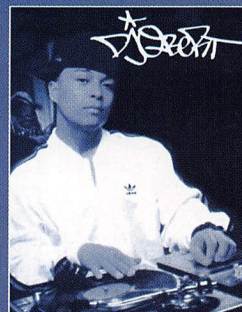
Night Warriors BR - Animated
Original Soundtrack
VIZ, Domestic

B

GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

DJ Q-BERT

Recently Gamers' Republic had the privilege of visiting the new Electronic Arts headquarters located in Redwood City to partake in EA's March Madness 99 launch party and NCAA Football 99 intercollegiate tournament final. The event was highlighted by a special appearance by Invisibl Skratch Piklz and March Madness soundtrack contributor, DJ Q-Bert. DJ Q-Bert is often cited as being the premiere turntablist today, and he performed an hour set explaining his craft, the technique of manipulating turntables as instruments and even invited guests from the audience to try their skills on the wheels of steel (game musician Tommy Talarico gave a humorous performance in lines with Milli Vanilli, as Q-Bert did the scratching and Talarico scratch-synced alongside). Along with an amazing sample of Q-Bert's turntable proficiency, GR was lucky enough to ask the legendary master of the ones and twos about his involvement with EA, his new album, *WAVE TWISTERS*, and future projects.



GR: FIRST OFF, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU FOR GIVING US THIS OPPORTUNITY AND INVITING US UP TO SEE YOU PERFORM.

Q-Bert: Cool.

GR: I GUESS I'D LIKE TO START WITH HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED IN EA'S MARCH MADNESS 99. AS MOST SPORTS GAMES SEEM TO USE GENERIC SOUNDTRACKS, I THINK IT'S UNUSUAL HOW EA HAS INVOLVED SOMEONE WHO'S SO RESPECTED IN THE UNDERGROUND HIP-HOP/TURNTABLIST SCENE.

Q: Well, I was contacted by someone at EA involved with the game who pitched the idea to the project managers, and was soon asked to provide some music for the game.

GR: WAS THE MUSIC A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH THE REST OF ISP (INVISBL SKRATCH PIKLZ) OR WAS IT JUST YOU WORKING ON IT?

Q: Mixmaster Mike helped lay down some of the beats, but I did most of the scratching and composition.

GR: DID EA HAVE YOU COME TO THEIR FACILITIES AND WORK ALONGSIDE GAME DEVELOPMENT?

Q: I did the work in my home studio.

GR: SO EA GAVE YOU FREE REIGN TO DO WHATEVER YOU WANTED?

Q: Actually, I was given a copy of the game, and while studying it I noticed the tempo of the ball bouncing was about 90 beats per minute. That's about the same tempo as the beats on my album, so I took tracks from *Wave Twisters* and laid them down for the game. Then I took sound effects from the game and pressed them down (onto wax) and used those to scratch over with.

GR: I'VE NOTICED YOU'VE DONE SIMILAR THINGS WITH VIDEO GAME SOUNDS ON PAST ALBUMS, LIKE USING STREET FIGHTER AND MORTAL KOMBAT SAMPLES IN YOUR MIXES. ARE YOU AN AVID VIDEO GAME PLAYER?

Q: Yeah, I like video games. Especially strategy-based games. I was once really into *Street Fighter* and played in competitions.

GR: LET'S TALK ABOUT YOUR NEW SOLO ALBUM, *Wave Twisters*. THE ALBUM REALLY SEEMS TO HAVE A SCIENCE FICTION THEME RUNNING THROUGH THE TRACKS. CAN YOU TELL US WHAT THE THOUGHTS WERE BEHIND THE ALBUM?

Q: Well, when I was a kid I saw the Beatles movie *The Yellow Submarine* and it gave me the idea to make an album that had a story that ran all the way through from beginning to the end. We're actually working on animation for the album. It should be finished in about a year. Also, I've written about what each track is about and what thoughts went into each song on our website (www.skratchpiklz.com), as most people may not understand what they mean.

GR: I'VE HEARD YOU'LL BE TAKING A WHOLE YEAR OFF.

Q: This is true. I'll be mostly relaxing and working on some new secret stuff. I'll also be laying in some sound effects for the animation and concentrating on its production. The storyline is still being created, so they may want to bring me in to create sound effects, like space crafts here or lasers here, for the animation and also to rearrange the album to match the images.



GR: WHAT STYLE OF ANIMATION WOULD YOU DESCRIBE IT TO BE?

Q: I guess it could be described as being abstract, trippy MTV-style animation. Doug Cunningham, the artist who came up with the style, is also the person who did the inside sleeve art for the album. The storyline revolves around the concept of inner space. You know, as there are atoms within molecules, I thought of the concept of each molecule as its own universe – the atoms are the galaxies and the protons and neutrons are individual planets.

GR: HOW LONG WILL THE ANIMATION BE AND WHERE WILL WE BE ABLE TO SEE IT?

Q: The movie will be about fifty minutes in length and you'll be able to find it at many music stores.

GR: WILL ISP AND ITS MEMBERS REMAIN ON YOUR OWN LABEL? I'D IMAGINE THAT, WITH YOU AND MIXMASTER MIKE (RECENT BEASTIE BOYS DJ) BLOWING UP IN POPULARITY, BIG NAME RECORDING COMPANIES HAVE APPROACHED YOU TO SIGN ON.

Q: We have no desire for that, as we've heard way too many horror stories about signing with bigger companies. We're happy where we are!

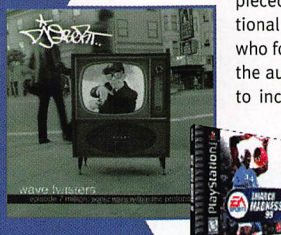
GR: GREAT! WELL, THANKS FOR LENDING US SOME OF YOUR TIME AND GOOD LUCK WITH THE ALBUM AND YOUR OTHER PROJECTS.

Q: Thanks, and be sure to check out *March Madness 99*!

SPECIAL THANKS: TIFFANY DEANG AT ISP, SCOTT GAMEL AT EA SPORTS AND DAN "PRRRRAZZ" LORMON FOR HIS HELP IN MAKING THIS INTERVIEW POSSIBLE!

Since his arrival in 1991 on the hip-hop/turntable scene, DJ Q-Bert has become synonymous with belief-defying technical turntable skills and an undeniable proficiency for innovative aural manipulation. *Wave Twisters* is Q-Bert's first solo release on the ISP label, a hip-hop tour-de-force mixture of high concept musical narrative (the album follows the form of a sci-fi television show, complete with commercial breaks), alongside his signature mark of high-quality scratches, beat juggles and use of amusing samples (including a humorous sample of old-school Donkey Kong). As the album is a soundtrack for the above-mentioned animation and EA's *March Madness 99*, Q-Bert has pieced together 12 tracks with a science fiction theme, and an additional five tracks of turntablist wizardry that will surely amaze those who follow underground hip-hop. A notable track is "Aphrodisiskratch," the audio equivalent of an orgasm (his mother had asked for him not to include it, as it sounded sinful). Alongside his earlier release *Demolition Pumpkin Squeeze Musik* (still my favorite), Q-Bert exudes a talent of being able to convey both thematic content and head-bob-inducing beats.

Gregory Han



Wave Twisters
DJ Q-Bert
Galactic Butt Hair Records, Domestic

A



BATMAN BEYOND

Kids WB

TVG
TELEVISION

Retribution is at hand! After the abysmal *Batman and Robin*, in which Joel Schumacher took what little dignity Batman had left and flushed it down the porcelain bowl, I thought the caped crusader had seen his better days. So it was with great rapture I received the news of *Batman Beyond*, the new futuristic animated series from none other than Paul Dini, Bruce Timm, and Alan Burnett, the same crew responsible for Batman's last hurrah, '92's *Batman: The Animated Series*. They have skillfully taken the Batman experience to an unexpected new extreme once again.

Set well in to the Millennium, we find an elderly Bruce Wayne, barely capable of sustaining battle, even in the slender new futuristic Batsuit (a technical wonder, with sensory circuitry and onboard flight controls). Within minutes after the opening of episode one, he turns out the lights in the Bat Cave forever, and a little piece of you seemingly goes with it. It isn't until a fate similar to young Bruce Wayne's affects the young Terry McGinnis that the plot begins to unravel, and a new Batman emerges. With a seldom-seen level of sophistication for an animated film, as much for adult fans as the



kids, *Beyond* bridges the generation gap to the extent that you'd never know there was one and presents an adventure primed for fan approval. It's masterfully drawn, written and animated. If you missed the one-hour season premiere, track down the video or (hopefully) DVD as soon as it's released. The sophistication of the animation, character design, opening visuals and music, and voice acting are a rarity in modern animation. If they manage to keep the quality at this level it will be miraculous, but even if they don't, at least the Batman legend will live on – until the next big Hollywood endeavor either furthers the bloodline or sends it back into a tailspin. **A**

DAIMAJIN

ADV FILMS

Originally released in Japan in 1966, this classic Japanese horror story is a tale of trust, betrayal and divine retribution rolled into one action-packed movie. The story tells of a powerful, terrible god known as Daimajin (big devil) who has laid dormant for many hundreds of years. The god resides in stone form in a mountain nearby the village where the story takes place. The king of the land is betrayed by his closest vassal, and is overthrown. His troops are slaughtered, but thanks to Kogenta, his most trusty vassal, his son and daughter are saved and hidden from the new, evil king. Kogenta hides the children for ten years inside the mountain of the Daimajin, a place where no one dares enter. From here the story is one of revenge and destruction, with hundreds of enslaved villagers and samurai engaging in battles and skirmishes until the inevitable happens, and the Daimajin wreaks havoc. All in all, this movie stands the test of time well, and seems very modern, considering it is over 30 years old. If you are a fan of Japanese tales of old, then try *Daimajin*. There are two follow-up volumes also available, so be prepared for the green-faced deity to cause more trouble in the not-so-distant future! **C**



VAMPIRES

COLUMBIA TRISTAR HOME VIDEO/DVD

I'd rather watch *Ishtar* with no sound! I'd rather watch *The Mario Movie!* Hell, I'd rather watch paint dry than sit through John Carpenter's action-horror dud, *Vampires*, again. Giving films like *Interview With the Vampire*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Blade* a bad name, things start out bad and just get worse. When we first meet our able band of slayers – an out-of-shape, womanizing band of alcoholics (chosen by the church – yeah right) that encounter their first wimpy vampire – it's all the entire lot can do to bring it down as they clumsily poke and prod at the hissing menace. Of course, immediately after, they split up and take down nine like shooting fish in a barrel. And dragging them out of a house with a wench? We all know they'd get hooked up on the first doorway... good call. Carry them out, please. Later, at the post-slaughter suaré, as they booze it up and fight over 10-dollar hookers, we meet the Master Vampire. Looking like something out of an eighties new-wave band, he proceeds to toss the heifers aside like a human salad shooter. Next, using a hooker he just nibbled on, the remaining two hunters, James Woods (who must have lost a bet to take this role) and Billy Baldwin, looking pretty hap to be there, use the undead hooker to find the "goon." You see, they're hooked up telepathically, although, strangely, she can see through his eyes but he can't see through hers. Next, a simple gas fire goes up like a poison-gas factory in downtown Baghdad as Woods toasts the evidence. All the while, John Carpenter's familiar guitar licks, left over from his last super-turd *Escape from LA* (in which I escaped the theater!), play along in the background. There are also fatal flaws in the effects department as well, which are B-movie, low budget. This is not the same John Carpenter who brought me *In the Mouth of Madness* and *The Thing*. I hope that he finds his way back to the cinema sometime soon. I sure do miss him. **D-**



THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR:

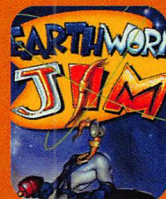
BY ANGELA HARROD

• Move over, *Titanic*, Disney could be going for the crown of "most expensive movie ever made" with its upcoming *Dinosaurs*. This prehistoric animated epic has already tipped the budget scales at \$200 million and it's not even finished yet. The movie has been in progress for more than a decade and Disney is hoping to finish it by the end of 1999. We'll keep you posted, but you can imagine any movie costing this much so far is going to be something very spectacular.

• Douglas TenNapel, creator of *Earthworm Jim* and genius of all things animated, has a lot of new projects up his sleeve. The multi-talented maestro is working on his first full-length movie, entitled *Mothman*. We've only seen a tiny glimpse of trailer so far, but from what we can gather it's along the lines of *The Fly* – a man who turns into a Moth. We'll have plenty more on *Mothman* and an interview with Doug when he's not so busy...could be a while!

• Kenny may always be getting killed, but he'd better brush himself off and get back on his feet, because soon he'll be starring in a feature-length movie of *South Park*. Well, it was bound to happen with this mega-successful TV series. Rumor has it they have a \$1.5 million budget, which doesn't sound like a lot compared to *Dinosaurs*, but in the hands of directors and creators Trey Parker and Matthew Stone, it's bound to be a major success.

• No solid news, just rumors that famed Sierra horror game *Gabriel Knight* is also making it to the big screen. *Gabriel Knight: Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned* is tentatively down as an April release. Tim Curry is set to play the part of Knight in this vampire flick. More news as we get it.



CINEMATRIX

THE GAMER'S GUIDE TO FILM



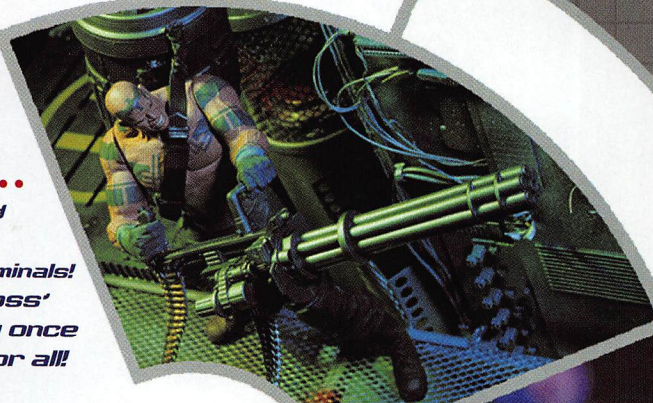
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CONTEST

Gamers' Republic, in conjunction with Todd McFarlane [creator of Spawn®] and Konami, are proud to bring you one of the coolest competitions of all time. Konami's Metal Gear Solid characters have been transformed into high-quality, detailed action figures by McFarlane Toys, and they promise to be one of the most collectable video game accessories ever. Each figure features its own unique clothing, weapons and equipment, and all have fully movable limbs, allowing for realistic posing. We are pleased to be able to give you the chance to win these great figures as well as some other juicy prizes, so climb into your best stealth pants and go get 'em, Snake!



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Gamers' Republic
COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE



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To enter, simply send your name, address, and e-mail [if you've got it] on a postcard to:

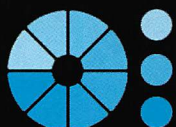
MGS Sweepstakes
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SPECIAL OPERATIONS

KEY STATUS

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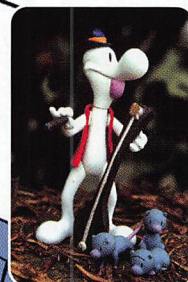
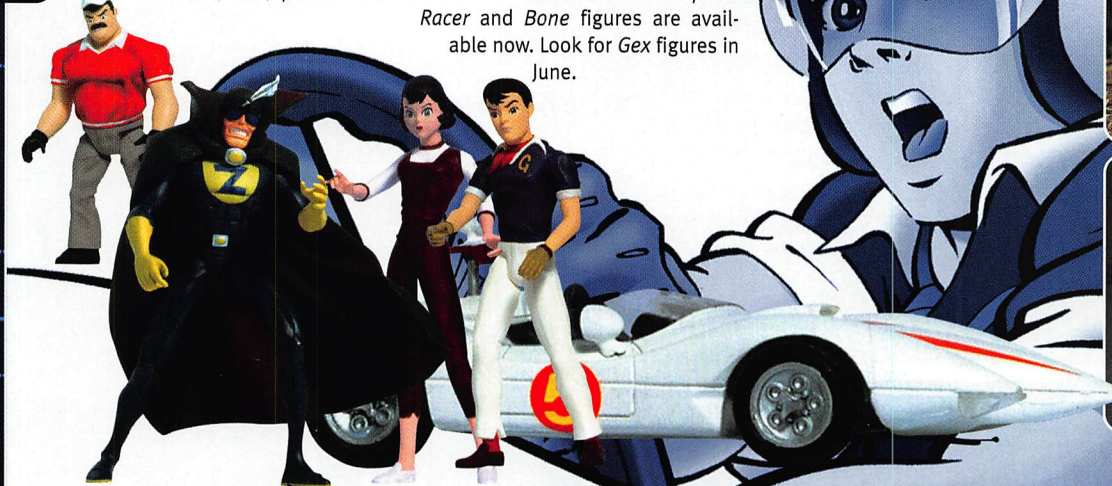


GR SYNTHETIX

COLLECTIBLES : ACTION FIGURES : MODELS

Christmas has come and gone. Now it's time for you to spend some money on yourself! We can't think of any better way than these awesome *Quake* toys from ReSaurus, the company behind the impeccable *Crash Bandicoot* figures. Raising the bar to McFarlane levels, ReSaurus has become the leader in game related figures. These amazing *Quake* figures will be widely available (Feb. 1 at Babbages, EB, KayBee, Target, Toys 'R' Us, WalMart, etc., priced from

\$7.99 to \$9.99) by the time you read this so shut down your PC long enough to grab some before it's too late. Also from ReSaurus are these great *Speed Racer* and *Bone* figures (from the Diamond Comic) and coming soon, *Gex* two-packs are next on the ReSaurus agenda. Two-packs will feature Gex in full costume and a boss from the game, which will include Agent Xtra with Rez, Grand master Gex with Moo Shoo Pork, Private Gex and the Sarge, and John Gex and Skeleton Pirate. *Speed Racer* and *Bone* figures are available now. Look for *Gex* figures in June.



FOX GROUP

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CODENAME: SPACE SEALS
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TOYS
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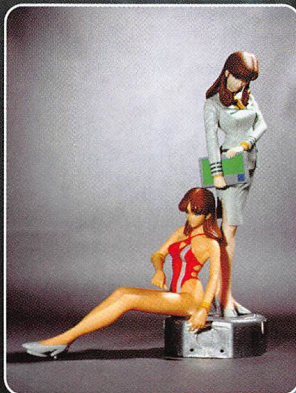


And for all of you *Godzilla* fans (of the lizard, not the movie) out there, here is the ultimate in *Godzilla* goods—*Super Size Godzilla*. This amazing rubber creature stands over two feet high and is over three feet long! With onboard sound effects you control by reaching into its child-sized head, and excellent detail, it's one impressive specimen. At \$150-175 it's not cheap, but since only 2,500 were produced, it's extremely collectible.

[GODZILLA]



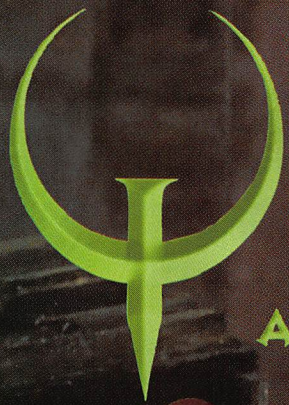
From one of Japan and America's most revered anime series, *Super Dimensional Fortress Macross*, these large figures come fully painted and assembled with bases. Over 10 inches tall and ultra detailed, they're a steal at \$19.99 for any anime aficionado.



GR SYNTHETIX

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FALLOUT



Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:

Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 218,
Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear Gamers' Republic,

First of all I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to become a member of the Republic and become one of your loyal readers forever. Second, I have some questions that I hope you will answer: (1) Will Konami make *Contra* for the Nintendo 64 and if they do, would it be a two-player game? (2) Will Nintendo ever make a volleyball game for the N64 like the one for the SNES? And (3) Is Unreal going to appear on the Nintendo 64, and if so, will it use the Expansion Pak?

Thank you for everything.

Sincerely,

Abdullmajeed Al-Humeidan
Saudi Arabia

Dear Abdullmajeed,

It's obvious you've got yourself a Nintendo 64 and a good idea of what you would like to be playing. Well, I have good news and bad, depending on how you look at it. Although Konami have not officially announced *Contra* for the N64 they have mentioned it (off the record) and after *Castlevania*, presuming it does well, *Contra* is the most obvious choice for the next big game. The bigger question is whether it would be developed by one of their in-house teams or farmed out again, as were the last two PlayStation incarnations that did not live up to the legacy as result. As soon as we hear confirmation either way, we'll let you know. As for a volleyball game, well, the sport really hasn't taken off enough yet to warrant a first-party release from Nintendo directly; however, I wouldn't be surprised if *Beach Volleyball* shows up in one of the many inevitable Summer Olympics titles planned for the upcoming games in Salt Lake City, Utah. And, finally, no word yet on a version of *Unreal* for the Nintendo 64, but even if they did decide to cash in on a 64 version, it would fall short of the original's splendor. Rather than wait for *Unreal* to come around, have a look at *Quake II* or *Turok 2*. They're both similar in scope and gameplay and you can buy them both right now. Nintendo have a lot in store for you my friend, so have fun! -DH

Dear GR,

I was reading the October issue of your magazine and I was interested in Dave Rees' *Final Fantasy VIII* report. Being the *Final Fantasy* fan that I am, I realized that two of

the apparent enemies, Biggs and Wedge, are names of two of the original members of Avalanche in *Final Fantasy VII*. The mag says that they are assigned to fix a tower. Could this possibly be the same tower that they died on in the last game? Also, from looking at the pictures, I saw a city that looked a lot like Midgar. Midgar that was also in *Final Fantasy VII*. I read that article, too. I read that you fight a boss and then have fifteen minutes to backtrack everything before it all blows up. This is surprisingly a lot like *FFVII*. The report also says that the first and easiest foe that you encounter is a soldier. Maybe it's just coincidental that the first enemy in *FFVII* was also a what... You guessed it, a soldier. In conclusion, I have found that *Final Fantasy VIII* will be a lot like *Final Fantasy VII*, but being the die hard *Final Fantasy* fan that I am, I will buy this game. Please tell Dave of my observations. Thank you for making such a great mag.

Robert B. Gant

Dave says "O.K." and you're welcome. -DR

Dear Gamers' Republic,

First I would like to say thank you so much for your magazine, it's structure and its solid spectrum. Now please answer my "Q" because no one else will... Is there going to be a Neo Geo 64 game console or not? You see, I'm a Neo Geo Freak. I've already bought a Neo-Pocket and would feel truly blessed if I could play *Samuri Spirits 64 2* at home. Please, please respond.

Luein Romana

Rialto Ca.

Dear Lu,

Can I call you Lu? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but no, there will not be a Neo-Geo 64 home console, anytime, anywhere. With the superior Dreamcast already out in Japan, the Geo 64 hardware is already too dated. Your best bet is to try and find a used coin-op version, which shouldn't be so tough, if you've got the bucks. Hey, that's what I did. You see, I too am a Neo Geo freak. I'll never forget the first time I played *Magician Lord*. But hey, I have good news, too. Well, you personally may not find it so good... SNK are gearing up for the release of the COLOR NeoGeo Pocket here in the states! I know, I know, you already bought the black and white (and poorly lit) version.

But hey, look on the bright side – the NeoGeo Pocket will undoubtedly do huge business in the U.S., and that could fuel a new Neo Geo home console. See, always a bright side! -DH

Dear Gamers' Republic,

I had been eagerly awaiting *Thrill Kill* since I first read about it. Wild characters, B-movie gore, and 4-player fighting: what a groundbreaking blast it would be! I was crushed to hear that *Thrill Kill* had been killed by a new parent company's overblown set of "morals." What's the problem here? It's not like EA are Disney. As Mike Griffin pointed out, the existence of *Road Rash* disproves their sainthood. Perhaps a few family-values- preaching investors (\$) threatened to back out if EA didn't cut the game.

I wish there were some way that we, the gamers, could petition EA and convince them to release *Thrill Kill*. Perhaps if we could prove that demand for the game is high enough to guarantee considerable revenue, we could sway their position. Now that the game has gained an "adults only" rating, sales would be fantastic. There is a huge number of adult gamers out there like myself. We have been hard-core gamers since the 2600 days and as the quality of games has increased, so to has our love for them. In fact, the quality has become so good that video games are attracting people that have never played before – i.e., my 51-year-old father has started playing *Resident Evil 2*! It's time for publishers to cash in on this phenomenon. We are not children any more. We are adults with jobs and we like to spend our money on video games. *Thrill Kill* would have been a perfect way to tap into this market.

It's simple: We want the game. If EA release it, they'll make a killing. Surely their investors would love to see those gains, don't you think?

Chris C.

via E-mail

Dear Chris,

This is Mike here. Great letter by the way. I've been hearing the same justified complaints from dozens and dozens of mature gamers and I think it's time for action. I'm tired of sitting around bitching about this whole situation. In fact, every time I play

Thrill Kill with a room full of fighting game freaks, having a great time, I'm thinking, I can't believe EA wouldn't release this game! Before I know it the other three players are telling me how insane it is that *Thrill Kill* isn't coming out. It's so obvious that the game would sell a ton of copies.

THRILL KILL PETITION:

O.K. guys, it's time to let EA know just how much we want *Thrill Kill* on the market, and that a giant, receptive audience of 18 year-old-plus gamers are ready to accept the title and its glorious 4-player carnage. If you're ready to take action, send a short e-mail (no more than 50 words) explaining why EA should release *Thrill Kill*. Choose your words carefully so I can forward it to the right folks at EA. The title of the e-mail should be "I want Thrill Kill." Send it to: editorial@gamersrepublic.com, and cross your fingers. It's my mission in life to get *TK* released before the summer, so I'll do my best, with your help! - MG

Dear Gamers' Republic,

I love your magazine not only because of the information on games for console and

PCs, but also because it is the only magazine with a strong section devoted just to Japanese animation.

Back in your September edition, you said that Nintendo of Japan was going to release *Pokemon Stadium* in August in Japan with a converter called the "64GB Pack." I absolutely love *Pokemon*, so I *must* have this N64 game. Will this game ever come out in the U.S., and if so, what is the release date and cost? Also, will it come with the 64GB Pack?

P.S. If possible, don't put this letter in the magazine but write back directly.

Chris Jahnke
Garland, Texas

Dear Chris,
Certain circumstances made it impossible to not print your letter. Mostly it had to do with the fact that this is a fairly common question, so we thought we'd out you as the big *Pokemon* freak of Garland. Also, you asked us not to, so we basically had no

choice. Regarding a U.S. version of *Pokemon Stadium* and the GB Pack, Nintendo can only offer a tentative release date of sometime this summer. There will most likely be a bundled package, and considering NOA's aggressive pricing policies in this country, we wouldn't expect to see it retail for more than \$70.

There are several possible reasons for the long gap between U.S. and Japanese releases. (1) *Pokemon* needed time to establish itself in this country. (2) A great deal of wacky Japanese announcer yelling has to be translated and re-recorded in an acceptable fashion. (3) Nintendo had a crowded holiday season and didn't want anything in the way of *Zelda*. It's worth noting that the U.S. Gameboy *Pokemon* games are not compatible with the import *Pokemon Stadium* & GB Pack, so be sure to wait for the official U.S. release.

As a final note, each editor here at GR can be e-mailed directly. Just combine the first letter of the editor's first name with their last name, add @gamersrepublic.com, and you're in business! See ya' next month!

advertiser index

ACTIVISION	IBC
ADV FILMS	89, 93
ANIME NATION	95
ASC	3
BANDAI	27
BAY SOFT	109
CART MART	116
CHIPS N BITS	110
CORNER	111
CRAVE	15
GAME DEALER	33
GAMES ETC.	116
GAME XPRESS	113
HIMEYA SOFT	91
JAPAN VIDEO GAMES	120
KONAMI	13
MAGIX	112
RESAURUS	107
SGRL	35
UBI SOFT	6-7, 105, BC
VIDEO GAME LIQUIDATORS ..	117
VIZ	97
WESTWOOD	IFC-1
WIT	115
WORKING DESIGNS	16-17

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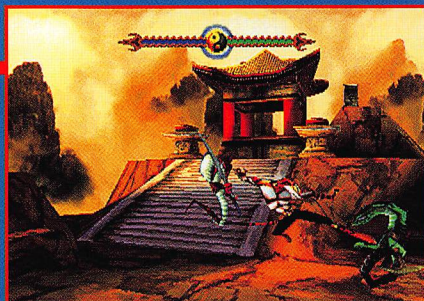
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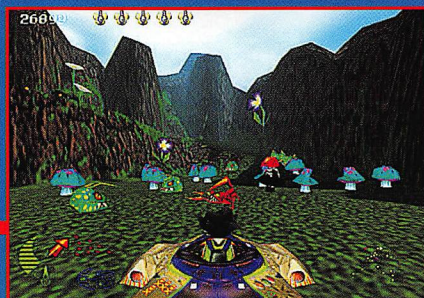
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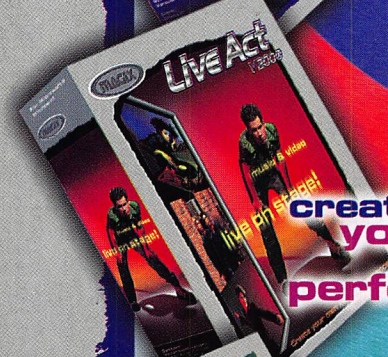


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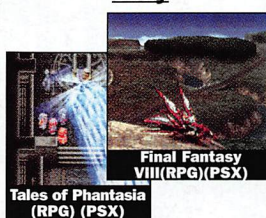
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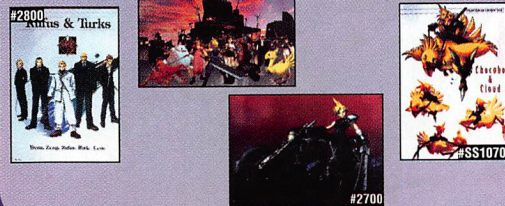
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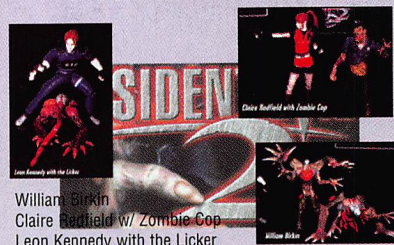
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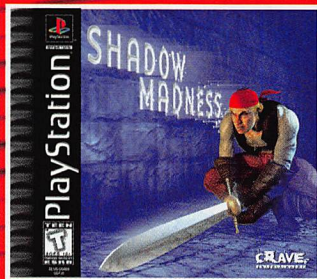
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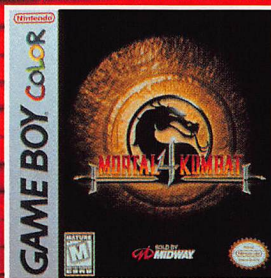
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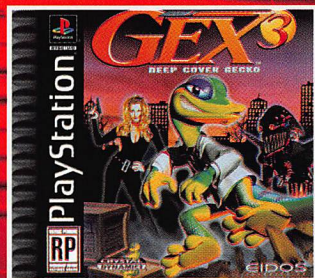
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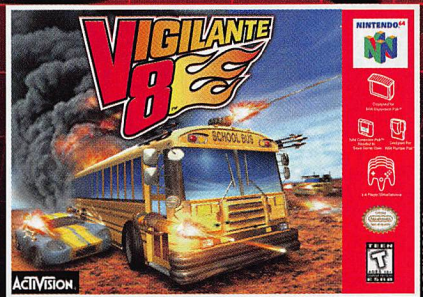
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In "Above the Earth," Thunderforce V switches gears and leaves the atmosphere for a bit of deep space shooting action!

Level five of *Thunderforce* begins high in the clouds as you dock with your space booster and head for the stars (01). Flying high above the planet, you'll find different weapons at your disposal with the space booster. Your primary blast is like an overcharged twin shot in your normal ship, and you've got a spread of linked lasers to eliminate targets above and to the rear. A meter denoting your booster's shield strength is in the lower left-hand side of the screen. Once this is depleted, you revert to your normal form with slightly different weapons than your atmospheric ones.

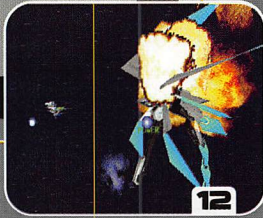
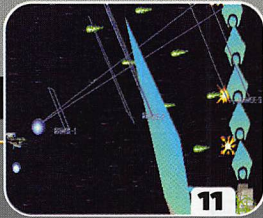
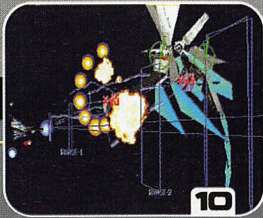
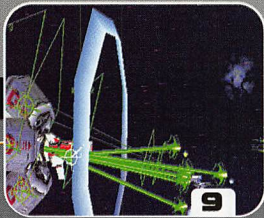
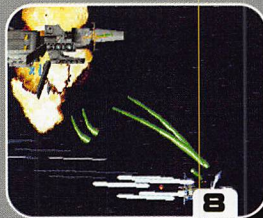
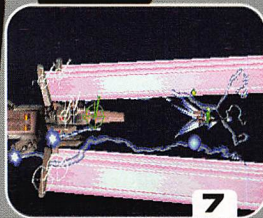
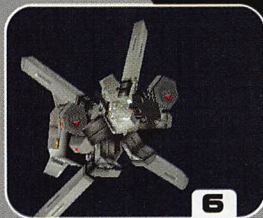
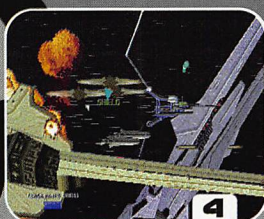
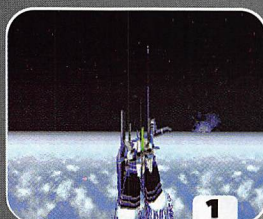
As the level begins, make prodigious use of your forward blaster (02, 03). Try and hang on to your booster for as long as possible. When you come across the big "capital" ships, blast them with your forward shot and fly under or over them and switch to your rear lasers to finish them off (04).

You then come upon your first real foe, the ship from *Thunderforce IV* (05)! Move smoothly up and down, avoiding his green lasers. If he fires missiles, simply shoot them, though his green balls are a little harder to avoid. Lead them around until they

dissipate. He then gets a booster of his own and forms the boss for this level, Original Vastel (06). You've probably lost your booster by now.

For his first attack, fly in front of him and sit directly before his cockpit while firing a charged shot backwards (07). Next he'll fire green chasing lasers at you. Use your supreme skill and lead them off screen (08). He'll change forms and come at you from behind again with a big pulse blast. You should've picked up a Free-Range weapon in the course of the level, and this is the best weapon to use here, as you can cause big damage without being right in front of him (09). Now he'll change to his final form, a great, bird-like creature. Continue using the Free-Range as he unleashes a barrage of bullets. They'll hang in the air for a bit and come after you en masse (10), so be ready to lead them away. Now he'll move into the background and fly north to south shooting (11). Finally, he presents himself properly to you one more time, and just blast him with a powered-up forward shot, and he dies (12). This

triggers the new-for-PS FMV leading up to the last stage. Tune in next month for the final solution.



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From the most exalted fighting game creators in the known cosmos, Capcom, *Power Stone* for the Sega Dreamcast will soon bestow upon us 3D fighting at its highest level for a console... ever. Next month we'll bring you a stunning hands-on report, pictorial, and an interview with the game's makers! On that note, *Sega Rally 2* will hopefully do for racing what *Power Stone* will for fighting. We'll have *Rally* coverage as well. Also on tap for April: *Xena: Warrior Princess*, a report on the whereabouts of *Earthworm Jim 3D*, GT's *Wheel of Time*, the long-awaited review of Konami's *Silent Hill*, Nintendo's groundbreaking new 4-player interactive board game, *Mario Party*, and an in-depth look at the strangest Dreamcast game you'll likely ever see. It's gonna be a good one.

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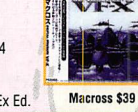
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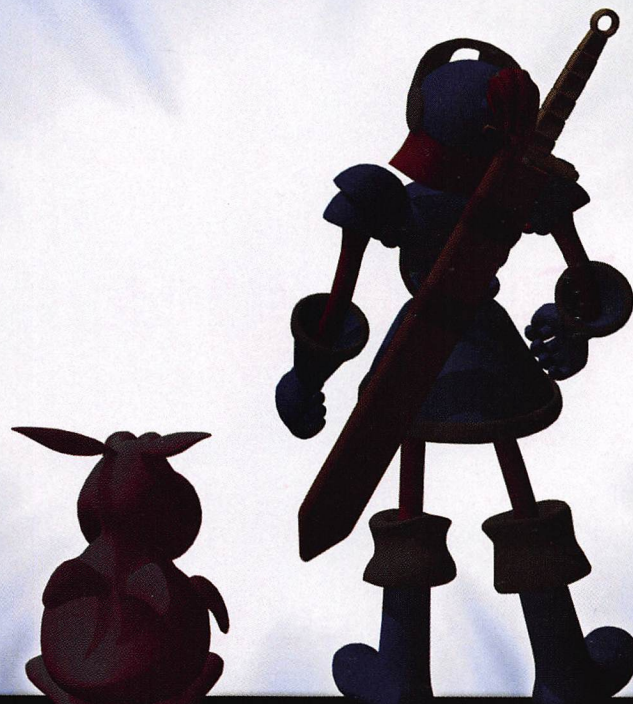
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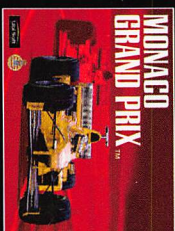


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